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**Heroes and Villains: Narratives of Public
Sector Reform in the UK and Scotland**

This thesis is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Social Policy and Criminology

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ABSTRACT

This study is based on a discourse analysis of reform narratives in two public sector organisations, one operating in a UK context and one in a Scottish context. The study uses the concept of organisational narratives (Gabriel, 1995; 1999; 2000; Sims, 2004) as a lens to organise and understand the presentation and translation of reform in these organisations and the wider government.

The thesis argues that there is a fundamentally inconsistent alignment of public sector reform narratives within governments, and challenges notions of a 'New Scotland' (Hassan and Warhurst, 2002; Paterson et al., 2004; Bechofer and McCrone, 2004) as being little more than rhetoric at the macro level of discourse. At the micro-organisational level, interviews with senior managers revealed that in both case-study organisations, common discursive devices and plot structures were utilised by managers in order to build authority and legitimacy within their organisations. It is these discourse linkages in the different policy practice sites that are the dominant narratives at work, rather than the macro level reform narratives of government.

The thesis examines the notion of 'double reform' whereby Scottish public sector workers have been subject to both the general sweep of neo-liberal public sector reforms, and changes related to the greater devolution of powers. This notion is largely overlooked by existing literature. It is argued

that this double reform has been an opportunity not a pressure, and that the Scottish Government has been able to exploit this opportunity for their own gain, to promote notions of Scotland as an independent nation-state.

This thesis demonstrates however, that macro-level success in the construction of Scottish narratives has not resulted in an evenly translated narrative within the public sector, raising important issues for the use of discourse in future public sector reform projects.

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ACRONYMS

CICA	Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority
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CHAPTER 1

TERRITORIAL POLICY-MAKING, DEVOLUTION AND PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

1.1 Devolution: The State of the Nation

A referendum in was held in 2014 to decide whether Scotland should be an independent state, resulting in a small majority in favour of retaining union with the rest of the UK. The calls for this referendum and the large minority in favour of independence are indicative of a crisis of identity within the UK, whereby strong pressures are driving some of its territories towards divergence from a contested and historically fragile unity (Jeffrey, 2009; MacKinnon, 2013; Clifford and Morphet, 2014). These pressures have led to, and been partially addressed by, a formal devolution of powers to national or city assemblies and parliaments. This devolution has been asymmetrical: the UK now has a complex and developing set of political and policy-making landscapes, consisting of an unevenly distributed set of powers to devolved decision-makers co-existing with core powers that remain reserved to the UK Parliament.

Public services in the UK are delivered by a patchwork of agencies that are varyingly accountable to the UK Parliament, a devolved parliament or assembly, or a combination of legislatures. This thesis' analyses are underpinned by case study research into two of these differing public agencies, to explore how the changing landscape is being translated in variable contexts. The cross-border Criminal Injuries Compensation

Authority (CICA) provides financial payments to victims of violent crime. It is formally sponsored by the UK Ministry of Justice, whilst also acting on behalf of the Scottish Government. Contrastingly, Scottish Enterprise is a non-departmental public body with economic development functions fully devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

The increasingly fractured nature of the UK's policy, political and economic geography, and the increasing relevance of questions about what it means to be British (Bechofer and McCrone, 2007), and the very future of the union itself, has never seemed more contentious and relevant. After over a decade of devolved governments for the smaller national partners of the UK, debates over the distribution of power and decision-making appear to be quickening and intensifying. Most notably, as referred to above, the Scottish referendum held in 2014 sought to gain electoral consent to become a fully independent country – a power handed over to the newly formed UK government more than 300 years ago. Despite the vote against independence, Scotland is now on the cusp of gaining significant further devolved powers. For many living in Scotland and the rest of the UK this feels like a truly significant historic moment.

This chapter discusses the role of *language* in the context of these changes and how language can assist with constructions of the state, and more specifically those of a 'New Scotland'. The chapter will also examine the situation of devolution within wider notions of public sector reform, and how this reform has evolved in Scotland. Limitations of existing literature on reform will be identified, along with new sites for exploration and how

this thesis addresses these gaps. Finally, the thesis' research questions are established.

1.1.1 Language and Change

The historical changes that are being experienced in Scotland are reflected in and communicated through a rapidly changing language. In the devolved nation of Scotland, language and signifiers have shifted considerably in even the last decade, leading to unevenness in the terms used. This thesis sometimes uses the term 'Scottish Executive', and sometimes 'Scottish Government', both of which are politically situated. The devolved administration in Scotland was originally legally known as the 'Scottish Executive'. However when the Scottish National Party (SNP) formed the minority government in May 2007, they re-branded the administration as the 'Scottish Government'. The UK Government finally being granted authority to legally change the name through the Scotland Act 2012.

These labels are not neutral signifiers, but in themselves politically loaded 'brands' that encompass both different understandings of the devolution settlement and different aspirations for the future of Scotland. Using Lury's (2004) framework of brands and understanding the nation as a constructed brand, the nation has no single entity and is composed of multiple and divergent historical layers that are constantly being reconstructed, as has been seen with the brands of the UK and Scotland. This confirms why the name of the government and its administration matters – as states are made and remade this reflects and creates space

for contest over meaning, identity and narrative. The nation state is never a fixed entity and is always subject to a constant flux of redefinition. It is a basic collective reference (Beland and Lecours, 2010), but regions (and in this case nations) are themselves political constructs (Allen and Cochrane, 2007). For Scotland, the language of the labels reflects the contested devolution settlement and pressure for greater change. Scotland's brand identifier of 'The Scottish Government' indicates an escalation of a strengthening notion of an independent and distinctively Scottish nation, itself being formed and recast by dominant political ideologies.

1.1.2 Understandings of the State in Nation-building

In constructions of the state in nation-building, it is not just labels and brands that are manipulated. The creation of various aspects of how we *understand* the state can be both more subtle and more endemic, than a simple choice of which overall label to apply to a government administration. Understanding of the national narrative is given meaning by the government's use of discourse in how it frames public policies and communicates this to the public. Beland and Lecours (2010) provide evidence that public policy has been used by nationalist movements as a nation and identity-building tool, influencing the development of social policy. They outline how nationalist movements have a tendency to promote themselves to citizens as wishing to build a progressive state that is "...modern, open, forward-looking..." (2010: 23). This notion of the modern state is itself used as a reference point to citizens, demonstrating how nationalist movements can play a central role in nation building, by

deploying constructions of national identity throughout the work of government and the development of social policy.

Applying this perspective to the UK, and more specifically Scotland, Williams and Mooney (2008) argue strongly that devolution should now be central to our understanding of social policy. Mooney and Williams (2006) outline how social policy is used to reproduce a sense of nation and national identity in the devolved administrations, and that this frames government as trying to construct a notion of nation around neo-liberal and market orientated themes and agendas. The means of doing this is to utilise discourses such as, for example, that used in the document *A Smart Successful Scotland* (Scottish Executive, 2001), that prioritise entrepreneurial and economic activity as imperative aims for the state and society. Mooney and Williams argue that in policy practice, welfare regimes for example, have been reconstructed around 'ways of life' based on themes of work and enterprise.

In Scotland the state is being deployed in nation building by the SNP in creating the political construct of a 'New Scotland' (Williams and Mooney, 2008) using imagery and identifiers, which pre-date the SNP and yet are utilised by them. The use of imagery such as a 'Celtic Lion' (Mooney, Scott and Mulvey, 2008) echoes Ireland's use of the widely recognised 'Celtic Tiger' symbolism to describe Ireland's rapid economic growth in the latter part of the Twentieth Century (Allen and O' Boyle, 2013). The use of this symbolism concurrently provides shorthand for describing an economic aspiration of fierce and strong capitalist growth, whilst simultaneously re-framing this more generic aspiration as specifically Scottish.

1.1.3 The Construction of a 'New' Scotland

The creation of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 has led to a developing strand of literature that explores evidence of two broad clusters of feelings: that Scotland is inherently different to the rest of the UK, in terms of Scottish attitudes being more liberal and egalitarian; and that devolution is itself part of a movement to create a 'new' Scotland that will facilitate Scotland's future economic prosperity.

Building on assumed Scottish characteristics of egalitarianism, there is a tendency for Scottish politicians to routinely claim that Scotland is distinctively 'fair' (Mooney and Scott, 2012). There is a strong existing literature base that stresses the distinctiveness of Scotland and argues that it has a different political landscape (McCrone, 2001), with education and health commonly cited as examples of the public sector where Scotland has a divergent approach from the rest of the UK. A range of writers have found difference and distinctiveness in Scotland's policy environment such as Paterson et al. (2004), Stewart (2004a) and Poole and Mooney (2006). This academic interest in territorial difference is not specific to Britain or Scotland, and itself is part of a broader global tradition of literature and research into difference in devolved administrations, such as Howlett and Newman's work on Canadian federal government (2010).

Within the context of the creation of the Scottish Parliament, the imagining of Scotland as having a distinctly different policy environment, has led to the construction of what has been loosely termed by theorists as a 'New

Scotland' (Hassan and Warhurst, 2002; Paterson et al., 2004; Bechofer and McCrone, 2007). This 'New Scotland' is an understanding of the Scottish policy environment as being fundamentally different to that of the UK: based on fundamental underlying differences in values, and with the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, able to operationalise these different values in policy development and delivery.

1.1.4 Problematising the 'New' Scotland

However, Mooney and Scott (2005) problematise the notion of a 'New Scotland', challenging the views of those who believe that post-devolution Scotland has experienced significant shifts in social policy and its impact. Mooney and Scott argue that whilst there have been important changes; there have also been significant continuities:

The discourse of a 'new' Scotland, we would argue, has a much wider and even more problematic meaning and resonance, resting as it does on a contentious interpretation of recent social and economic changes. That there have been far-reaching changes in Scottish society in recent decades there is widespread agreement, though all too often the uneven, partial and contradictory nature of many of these has not been acknowledged to an extent that is surely merited. (Mooney and Scott, 2005: 3).

This suggestion that Scotland's distinctiveness from the rest of the UK may have been overstated has been widely debated. The idea that Scotland is somehow inherently different to the rest of the UK is hotly

contested by many who identify powerful *converging* trends and pressures in more recent years. For example, Watson and West (2008) identify values of partnership and greater devolution of services as underpinning claims to Scottish policy and cultural difference. However, they argue that these value differences are predominantly of a rhetorical nature and that cracks in this rhetoric of partnership and devolution are evident in how traditional top-down management has already re-asserted itself in Scottish social services. Law and Mooney (2012) also reference Philips (2008) as indicating that the British state is fundamentally unable to accommodate [sub] national populations, suggesting that there will always be a homogenising pressure on Scotland.

1.1.5 The Usefulness of Claims to a 'New' Scotland

Within the debate as to whether Scotland is inherently 'different' to the rest of the UK it is useful to question why claims of difference arise. This is partly addressed by Mooney and Scott (2005) who outline that there was an expectation that devolution would lead to differing social policies. Megaughin and Jeffrey (2009) outline the founding assumption that the Scottish Parliament would represent a different way of 'doing politics', both by positively contrasting itself from Westminster adversarialism and cliques, and by using a consensus approach. Further evidence of this optimism for a 'New Scotland' can be found in Stewart (2004b) who points out that the then key devolution Minister Henry McLeish (subsequently to become First Minister, 2000 – 2001):

...sought to emphasise the potential for a distinctively Scottish path inherent in the devolution settlement... (Stewart, 2004b: 16).

This was compounded in government, for example when First Minister Jack McConnell (First Minister (2001 – 2007)) said at the Labour Party Conference in Autumn 2003 that the Scottish Executive's reforming agenda would be different to that pursued elsewhere in the UK (Stewart, 2004b). In so doing however, he exposed the complexities and contradictions in Scottish distinctiveness, for example by referring to the shared values and objectives of different countries in the UK that are now being presented by the SNP through the contested ideas of 'Social Union' (Scottish Government, 2013a).

1.1.6 Governance and the 'New' Scotland

An alternative explanation for the developing discourse of the 'New Scotland' may be found using the lens of 'governance'. The concept of 'governance' is also contested (Newman, 2001) and often embodies different meanings depending on the context of its use. For example the World Bank defines governance as:

...the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development... (World Bank, 1991: 1)

This contrasts with the more generic use of the term governance by businesses and institutions, more commonly used to refer to rules and

procedures of financial and corporate behaviour. In social policy, Daly (2003) understands 'governance' in relation to 'government'. Daly explains the difference as 'government' referring to a particular hierarchy or main agent of collective power and 'governance' implying a network of control and a process with diverse agents, not all of whom are necessarily 'state'. Newman (2001) summarises governance as a narrative of change that has allowed the state to adapt to new challenges. The success of governance as a way of steering and coordinating through networks and partnerships has been uneven, with continuing strong counter-pressures of resistance to this method of organisation and control. Where successful, this shift to governance has happened because complex social problems such as environmental degradation cannot be managed through top-down hierarchies. Importantly however, there is no shared view in the literature of what governance means or its historical chronology. In particular there is a lack of consensus as to whether it represents a loss of power by government or merely a different way of maintaining control.

Newman (2007) imagines governance as a cultural construction that requires legitimisation and institutional practice to be sustained. Key to Newman's theory of governance is that these discursive strategies are a type of work that actors engage in. This work produces texts, and in so doing manages and produces meanings. Governance change is itself seen as a narrative that can be disrupted and influenced. This rejection of governance as a unitary state and the consequential view of governance as being essentially in flux is supported by Bevir and Rhodes (2003) who similarly argue that actors have capacity to shape and change governance arrangements.

For the purposes of this thesis, governance is interpreted as challenging the notion of a sovereign nation state as a single form of government, and mirroring the complex and contested nature of the devolution settlement. This interpretation of governance fits well with Keating's (2009) concept of a 'pluri-national' state, referring to a Scottish distinctiveness which co-exists with a central UK state and institutions. These views on governance give us a picture of a dispersed policy process with multiple stakeholders, making the management of a devolved administration such as the Scottish Government more complex and multi-faceted. Thus, this thesis begins from the premise that within government and public bodies there is no single structure or permanent arrangement in place.

1.2 Public Sector Reform

We are modernising our democratic framework, with new arrangements for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the English regions, Parliament and local authorities. (Tony Blair, *Modernising Government*, Cabinet Office, 1999: 3).

The wave of devolution that broadly began with the establishment of devolved assemblies and parliaments within the UK, is also situated in notions of public sector reform and the idea that more localised decision-making could adapt and improve certain public services. In turn, devolution has then influenced how public sector reform more generally is implemented locally, leading to policy difference. The extent of public service reform is unique for the UK devolved administrations precisely

because they have experienced the 'double reform' of devolution itself, and public service reform.

1.2.1 Situating the Current Wave of Public Sector Reform

'Modernisation' as a problematised government conception of reform is hardly new and can be traced back to the 1960s in Prime Minister Harold Wilson's interest in modernising Britain through technologically advanced innovation (Parry, 2005). Although Wilson's '*White Heat*' speech was widely viewed at the time as a lightning rod for modernisation and reform, Sandbrook (2006) notes that not all contemporary observers were transfixed by this rhetoric and that there were a number of commentators who observed both that the speech only highlighted problems and that it lacked any specific detail. This is of relevance to this thesis because it illustrates how even this early discourse of reform was unevenly translated and contested. The critical analysis of Wilson's text by contemporary commentators serves as a precursor to the manner in which New Labour texts have been similarly dissected and challenged, perhaps most notably by Fairclough, for example, in his analysis of New Labour's ambiguous use of the term 'reform' (2000).

1.2.2 Neo-liberal Public Sector Reform

The *Modernising Government* White Paper quoted above was firmly rooted in fluctuating longer-term perspectives and internationally dominant paradigms on the necessity of change in the public sector. The reconstruction of government and public service during the last two to

three decades of the Twentieth Century and first decade of the Twenty-first Century has been influenced by the fluid and all-encompassing concept of neo-liberal managerialism. Managerialism is the ideology that more and better management will lead to improvements in efficiency and service delivery. It is a form of organisational reform that is often present in wider public service reform initiatives (Clarke, Gewirtz and McLaughlin, 2000b).

In social policy, academic literature developed in the 1980s that had a focus around the Conservative government and the ideologies of the 'New Right'. The New Right had a primary concern with the private sector: its practices, competitiveness and application to the public sector. New Right protagonists used managerialism to try and make public services more cost-effective by encouraging a managerial style closer to that of the private sector (Sapru, 2010).

McTavish (2003) explains the New Right as having, "...envisaged a declining role for the post-1945 state..." (2003: 175). From this perspective, government-sponsored management has injected business managerialism and market forces into the public sector, centralising and de-emphasising policy-making to focus on managerial issues. This 'business managerialism' involved asking managers to pay attention to priorities such as marketing and financial control, rather than focus on the public service itself. McTavish conducted an in-depth study of a Scottish further education college and interviewed a range of Scottish college stakeholders. In this context, McTavish found that managerialist pressures had changed the remit of college managers to include responsibilities for

issues such as cost control and information systems, which were not related directly to education. Additionally, the New Right wave of reforms was based on a strong belief in the importance of suppressing a public sector that was imagined as inherently failing. The state's failures were seen as both encouraging a culture whereby individuals were dependent on the care of the state (rather than being self-sufficient) and the crowding out of the private sector by behaving anti-competitively. Over and above these core failures, the state was constructed as costly, inefficient and apparently unable to deliver value for public money.

1.2.3 New Public Management

By the 1990s, a wealth of social policy literature that considered managerialism in public sector reform had amassed. Christopher Hood (1991) developed an ideal type known as 'New Public Management' (NPM) to describe the various elements of managerialism and this typology has become an important, but contested approach. Hood's seminal article, 'A Public Management for all Seasons', identified what he termed four 'megatrends' within NPM that can be seen as typifying the concept. These 'megatrends' are the limiting of government growth, increasing privatisation of government, the automation of public services and a heightened international agenda, both in terms of working in partnership with other states, and looking to universal international models for policy and decision making. This thesis will however identify alternative key messages or 'megatrends' in the case studies researched.

1.2.4 New Labour and Public Sector Reform

From 1997, the New Labour UK Government utilised different perspectives of managerialism in both new *and* familiar ways to promote their own brand of modernisation (Newman, 2001). The *Modernising Government* White Paper was published in 1999, after the referenda that led to devolution in the UK, but within the same political context. Therefore it fell to the new Scottish Executive to implement its managerialist reform in devolved areas of administration. Theorists such as Newman (2000; 2001) have explored what the term 'Modernising Government' means. Newman interprets the broader New Labour modernising project as both continuing with some of the previous Conservative administration's reforms such as around quality and efficiency, whilst at the same time appearing to move away from these reforms and establish new priorities such as inclusivity and power dispersal (Newman, 2001).

Examining the White Paper itself (Cabinet Office, 1999) provides further evidence to support Newman's analysis of a discourse rooted in previous reform. The paper sets out three main aims that can be summarised as joined-up policy making, user focus and efficiency, that to some extent were also evident in the previous Conservative administration's focus. However, 'Modernising Government' also aims to promote new objectives that are framed as being either renewing or novel. This framing has been explored by a number of theorists who have identified that discursive devices employed in public sector reform by New Labour were commonly based on the repeated use of adjectives that are a variation on 'modern',

for example, 'new', 'young' 'modernisation', 'fresh' (Clarke and Newman, 1998; Fairclough, 2000; Finlayson, 1998). This construction of reform as revitalising and freshening is an embedded foundation of the devolution project. Devolution was itself part of New Labour's re-imagining of how public services can be reformed through harnessing new and different approaches. *Modernising Government* (Cabinet Office, 1999) makes explicit reference to devolution:

Devolution is a crucial part of the Government's modernisation programme. It is a stimulus to fresh thinking about the business of government (Cabinet Office, 1999: 11).

In New Labour's framing of public service reform as 'modernisation', devolution is itself a modernising reform that fits neatly within a construction of efficient and appropriate government.

1.2.5 Public Sector Reform in Flux

Most important to considerations of public service reform and 'modernisation' is the understanding of reform as contested and always in flux: the complexity in public sector reform reflects the politics that underpin it. Clarke confirms (2004b) that the unsettling of the state has led to diverse concepts of reinvention, reform and modernisation. 'Old' conceptions co-exist with dominant reform projects leading to blockages to modernisation. This is evidenced by attempts to reform the NHS, where the embedded "potent symbolism" of universal welfare and care has acted as a brake on attempts by government to introduce changed practices.

Painter (2006) stresses that the modernisation of public services is not a simple continuum as there are a number of tensions, for example centrally versus locally driven reform. For him, the differences depend on current politics, and many policy initiatives seem to be constantly reforming rather than moving on from previous initiatives. This repetitive return to the drawing board makes reform even more difficult for those with responsibility for implementation on top of the existing 'organisational stabilisers' (i.e. historical cultures that favour continuity over reform). Painter suggests that consensus on reform is elusive and the OECD (2005) concedes that public service reform has, to some extent, failed to deliver the changes that the associated rhetoric has espoused. Changes to rules have not changed behaviour and culture, or sometimes have had perverse effects. Reform has proved unsustainable and sometimes implementing naively, without a necessary understanding of context and wider governance arrangements. Newman and Vidler (2006) give the example of consumerism in the health service as meaning something different to professionals, government and the public: reform is not a coherent entity but an uneven and at least partially contested hybrid of competing voices and interests.

The different strands of reform have been considered by a wide range of writers. For example Barnes, Newman & Sullivan (2007) consider public cynicism with government and politics. They examine the use of official discourses around the language of 'partners', 'active citizens', an 'empowered public' or a 'stakeholder public' to try and overcome this public cynicism, but argue that the impact of these discourses is limited by 'institutional resistance' which prevents significant public influence over

public bodies. Newman et al. (2008) focus on user choice and highlight the disparity between the meaning of user choice in academic critiques and its meaning in social policy practice, causing difficulties for useful debate. Whilst academia can see 'user choice' as a technique for greater empowerment of the marginalised, 'user choice' has more neo-liberal connotations in policy practice (see for example, Mooney (2006); Clarke and Newman, (1997)).

Over twenty years after Hood's seminal article, academics continue to debate what the concept of NPM was, and is. For example, Duggett (2007) portrays NPM as having been a dominant paradigm that achieved much and can now be 'contextualised' to local cultures, by which he means that the core NPM ideologies can still be adopted in various situations and adapted to fit local circumstances. Conversely, this supportive view of NPM is directly opposed by Pollitt (2007), who argues that NPM was always a site of conflict that has never been fully accepted. Pollitt explicitly rejects the notion that a universal model, tweaked for local circumstances, can be usefully employed.

1.2.6 Using Debates about Public Sector Reform in this Thesis

Debates about the universality of the reform model are key to this thesis, as it considers whether we are witnessing the implementation of a single global (or at least European) common template of reform or whether national (in the Scottish context) culture makes a significant difference. If evidence of local difference in reform can be identified, then in existing

theoretical terms, this could be attributed to 'path dependency' or 'translation'.

'Path dependency' is the notion that new ideas are implemented, but are shaped by factors already in place (Pierson, 2000; Kay, 2005). Translation on the other hand, focuses less on difference due to new ideas, and more on difference due to the work of communication and interpretation. Muller and Whittle (2011) explain how discursive devices are used to translate ideas in conversation between parties with variation a useful tool:

Translation occurs in the space and time between when an idea is first constructed (imagined) and when the idea becomes taken for granted (institutionalised) (2011: 187).

Translation is therefore work which brings an idea alive and uses discursive arguments to put policy into practice. This thesis contributes to this conceptual debate by examining discursive evidence of reform and national (Scottish) difference, supplementing knowledge on how change occurs, and considering whether inter-agency difference is due to the development of new ideas or the more subtle and complex process of translation

1.3 Public Sector Reform in Scotland and the Focus of this Thesis

Within the specific subject of public sector reform, there is conflicting literature as to whether Scotland is different to the rest of the UK. Some research appears to evidence that the Scottish Executive/Government has

not aligned itself with the UK government's notions of public sector reform (for example Parry, 2002; 2003; McTavish, 2003; Riddell, 2003; McCafferty and Mooney, 2010). Keating (2005) is discussing the perceived differences in reform approaches when he says that Scotland has:

...followed [a] more traditional social democratic model of public service delivery, based on universalism, egalitarianism and co-operation with public service professionals..." (Keating, 2005: 170).

Keating uses the specific example of education policy as a site for this purported difference, by asserting that England has diverged from the comprehensive education model, whilst Scotland retains an explicit commitment to it. He further makes a case for the contrast with England by purporting that Scotland has a relative disinterest in faith schools and that the government has brought back into local authority control the only two schools that opted out under the Conservative government in the 1990s. It is this purported difference between Scotland and the rest of the UK which this thesis seeks to test.

1.3.1 Problematising Difference in Scottish Public Sector Reform

On the question of distinctive difference in Scottish Public Sector Reform, one set of perspectives celebrates Scotland's approach to public service reform (Parry, 2002; 2003; McTavish, 2003; Riddell, 2003; McCafferty and Mooney, 2010), whilst other theorists challenge notions of any substantive difference from UK reform (Keating, 2005). The assertion of similarity is

not new and throughout the earlier years of Scotland's Labour/ Liberal Democrat coalition governments (1999 - 2007), academics were already noting clear similarities in the public sector reform discourses of the Scottish Executive and the UK government. In relation to the widespread use of the Private Finance Initiative in both administrations, Keating (2005) asserts that:

The public-service reform programme in Whitehall is closely linked to its Scottish equivalent, based on business practice, managerial efficiency and satisfying customers... (Keating, 2005: 170).

Parry (2002) notes that the Scottish Executive perpetuated the New Labour theme of 'better service' delivery, as the provision of public services in a quicker, more responsive and more efficient manner. While McTernan (2003a; 2003b; 2003c) agrees that the First Minister Jack McConnell's strategy for public service reform drew on the New Labour model of economic control, i.e. national standards and independent inspection.

There are constraints on devolved policy-making freedom due to many policy areas being reserved to the UK Government. This means that in significant areas of social policy, such as welfare benefits and taxation for example, the Scottish Government has no legal power to act, regulate or make legislation. This lack of autonomy severely restricts any space for the Scottish Government to deviate from wider UK Government practice. Poole and Mooney (2005) assert that much public service modernisation in areas such as health, have been subjected to similar neo-liberalist

based pressures in both Scotland and England. Law (2005) asserts that pro-business assumptions are just as strong in Scotland as in England. Moreover, Ferguson (2005) argues that the domination of a neo-liberal agenda in welfare undermines any difference and Arnott (2005) outlines how increasing convergence between economic and social policies are undermining distinctiveness in Scottish education. These ideas of a constraining structural pressure against inter-governmental difference suggest that agencies in different jurisdictions would be broadly aligned in understanding and approach, and it is this alignment or non-alignment that forms a key concern for this thesis.

A final key theorist who has identified similarity in Scottish and UK public service reform is the previously referenced Richard Parry. He has contentiously suggested that the Scottish Executive has been reinforcing UK frameworks, due to a lack of ideas of its own (2005). For Parry, modernisation facilitates the assertion of core departmental power over delivery agencies and the power of units personally loyal to the UK Prime Minister. If Parry's view were sound, this would undermine the Scottish Government's ability to stamp its own brand on reform. Writing before the SNP minority or majority administrations came to power, his view may now be argued to be excessively harsh. As was noted above, many areas of policy-making remain reserved to the UK government and successive Scottish Governments have arguably been constrained by both the 1998 devolution settlement and the wider neo-liberalising context. More persuasively however, Parry argues that similarity is due to a dearth of ideas, rather than as a result of any kind of power struggle. This reflects my own experience, as a civil servant (discussed in Chapter Three), of

Scottish civil servants sometimes working closely with their Whitehall counterparts, and to some extent using UK ideas to shape policy development in Scotland. This thesis' explicit concern with traces of difference will allow us to partially test this hypothesis and ascertain whether there is evidence of innovation in the Scottish Government.

1.3.2 Scottish Public Sector Reform and Governance

In governance terms, Daly (2003) suggests that modernisation has become an end in itself and references Rhodes (2000) as asserting that decentralised agencies are often centrally steered by increasing resource control. It would be possible to see the Scottish Government as a 'decentralised agency', although the devolution settlement effectively granted the then Scottish Executive 'Treasury-like' management of its own finances (Parry, 2002). In this respect, devolution is itself an element of a wider modernisation agenda. Devolution and the creation of decentralised assemblies and parliaments within the UK, was a key tenet of the New Labour imagining of modernising government and public service reform, as evidenced in the *Modernising Government* White Paper (Cabinet Office, 1999).

Importantly for these considerations, it must be established if the reform discussed is a representation of this shift to governance, and if the Scottish Government is part of a UK governance network that is progressing a shared agenda. On the other hand, is there any evidence of the Scottish Government steering a different policy agenda? If it is accepted that the concept of governance is based on key assumptions

about how the state and its agents manipulate diverse and multiple networks to grapple for control, then this conceptual framework can be applied to the development and maintenance of public sector reform. Is there evidence of governance at work in public sector reform discourses? Which discourses bear the traces of governance – those of central or devolved government? Or is governance at work outside of government? What does this suggest about the concept of governance and its assumptions about contemporary government and its mechanisms? Answering these questions is especially difficult because the concept is so complex and slippery. In using the concept of governance to inform this study, it is worth noting Mehde's view (2006) that governance is not a neutral analytical tool and includes certain normative connotations around the (in)ability of governments to deliver modern public services that distort its usefulness in research. This is important because it again re-affirms that the very concept of governance is itself based on certain assumptions and therefore its application should be grounded in an understanding of its analytical limitations.

1.4 Limitations of the Existing Literature on Reform

The existing literature outlined in the preceding sections has a specific focus on examining *actions* by government, their agencies and individuals. There is a clear literature gap around the rhetorical and discursive devices used by these same parties. The primary interest of this thesis lies in analysing the way discourses are utilised in policy making and meaning is constructed. Understanding the discursive construction of meaning in public sector reform provides new knowledge in these fields.

The preceding discussion has outlined a literature that focuses on devolution, Scottish distinctiveness and public sector reform, and a more limited consideration of the relationship between these phenomena. It has already been established that the current devolution settlement was included in New Labour's ideology of *Modernising Government* (1999), but there is a gap in the literature when it comes to interpreting how devolution is itself influencing *understandings* of reform. In 2006, Mooney, Scott and Williams asserted that discussions of devolution are largely dominated by a narrow focus on institutional or organisational difference, overwhelmingly from a political science perspective. Since they noted this, an increasing body of literature has considered policy or operational difference in the administrations, but there is still a very limited understanding of the role of discourse or ideology in these processes because the literature is generally dominated by the more traditional disciplines of political science and public policy. A focussed examination of reform in contrasting devolved and reserved contexts gives an insight to these generally overlooked processes at work.

As outlined in the preceding sections, arguments as to whether Scotland is inherently different to the rest of the UK reveal limited detailed rhetorical analysis of public sector reform in Scotland. Although some theorists have attempted to identify the UK reform discourse in Scottish Executive/ Government literature, there is no systematic or detailed critical textual analysis to enrich our understanding and much literature is theoretical or very narrowly focussed, creating an identifiable gap. Whilst illuminating the work of discourse in successfully deploying reform, devolution is

significantly absent from the work of theorists such as Newman (2000; 2001) and Clarke (1998). In this respect, the existing literature is largely silent on whether the language of reform is different in the devolved administrations.

1.5 New Sites for Exploration

This research considers whether, in a devolved context, the space for 'double reform' means that public sector reform is being translated differently in different territorial spaces, using a trans-discipline approach to provide a more informed understanding. Public sector reform is used as a vehicle by which to explore diverging and/or converging issues and themes in UK territorial politics and policy-making.

This interest grows from the existing literature that debates whether Scotland has a different approach to social policy to some degree from the rest of the UK. The thesis further examines whether the fluctuating constructs of a 'New Scotland' as a reformed and modernised Scotland, have found their way into SNP administration discourses, what kind of translation they have been subject to, or whether they have always been present.

This thesis addresses the literature gap concerning the use of discourse in the language of reform in the devolved administrations and considers whether the same language and discursive devices have been used in Scotland, and if so, in the same ways. It provides research to address the absence of micro-level analysis by focussing both on individual

organisations, and key members of staff within those organisations who have been able to shape the reform that occurred.

1.5.1 Searching for a Micro-level Understanding of Scottish Public Service Reform

Although there is clearly a dominant narrative of macro-level policy divergence, the evidence for this divergence does not demonstrate an understanding of how this divergence is created and supported at the micro-level. This has created a substantive research gap at the micro-level of analysis and understanding. The absence of micro-level understanding is noted by Mooney and Law:

Much has been written about different aspects of New Labour's social and public policies and of the organisational changes that have been wrought as a result of public sector 'reform'. However, with relatively few exceptions, this is primarily from a 'top-down' perspective, with a focus on policy making and/or governance. Much less attention has been given to how this reform process is impacting on the welfare workforce, particularly from the standpoint of the workers who are actually involved in service delivery...All too often the 'voices' of these workers have been marginalised in both official discourses and in academic study (Mooney and Law, 2007: 2-16).

In this quote Mooney and Law are noting the absence of an understanding of impact of policy making on civil servants and other public service staff. However, of equal or possibly even more importance, is an understanding

of staff as actors who translate narratives of reform and apply them to other changes they may experience. The same authors (Law and Mooney, 2007) identify that unhappy workers have the options of exit, loyalty or 'voice', whereby workers "...make views known, undertake various overt forms of resistance..." (p274) and that "Managerial control is never complete; it is deeply contested..." (p270). This theorizing highlights the relevance of this gap in micro-analysis and research. Whilst there is limited literature acknowledging the assumed importance of staff as independent actors in the shaping of policy and reform, yet there is insufficient data and analysis examining the detail of how this happens and providing voice to the actors themselves caught in the double reform of devolution and public service reform. This thesis addresses this research gap by focussing on particular sections of the public sector, and further develops an understanding of how resistance can be exerted, and reform translated by public sector staff.

1.5.2 The Role of Individual Actors

The analysis of interviews with senior public servants is predicated on an assumption that key actors in the public sector can provide an insight into reform and themselves play a significant role in its implementation and delivery. Whilst not specifically theorising on UK devolution, Batley (2004) states that in developing countries, it is international agencies and core government officials who are the main actors in service delivery reform. This contrasts with his ideal of ordinary citizens being the principal actors in policy-making, suggesting that organisational reform is more difficult than economic policy reforms. Although Scotland is not a 'developing'

country, we could apply Batley's framework to the UK to partially explain Scotland's potential for public sector reform. If Scotland is the minority 'poor relation' to England's position of superiority, then it could be in a similar position to developing countries vis-à-vis the developed west. It therefore follows that it may have the potential for reform controlled by key civil servants and outside agencies (including UK Government departments), rather than from within its own body of politicians. This may hamper Scotland's ability to forge its own public sector reform discourses.

Since the creation of the Scottish Parliament, there have been clear examples of an attempt to forge a distinct rhetoric of a Scottish-focussed form of reform. Donnelly (2004) discussed the Scottish Executive's organisational change structure '*Changing to Deliver*' which was initiated in 2002. This represented the Scottish Executive's response to demands from both within government and by the electorate for public service reform and continuous service improvement. Donnelly asserts that the relationship between Scottish Cabinet Ministers and Senior Civil Servants is key. This partially echoes the application of Batley's framework, by stressing the importance of key officials. Donnelly and Batley prompt us to reflect on the pivotal role that can be played by *individual* civil servants in influential roles. This particular theme will be further developed in Chapter Six's examination of the interview data and the evidence it provides with regard to the dominance and impact of personal views of senior public officials.

The idea that public servants are themselves active agents of change has a rich tradition in the literature. A particularly significant work is that of

Lipsky (1980) who coined the term 'street level bureaucrats' to refer to public sector workers who deliver front-line services and are effectively constrained by the structures they are forced to work within. He said that:

I argue that the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively **become** [author's own emphasis] the public policy they carry out. I argue that public policy is not best understood as made in legislatures or top-floor suites of high-ranking administrators, because in important ways it is actually made in the crowded offices and daily encounters of street-level workers...One aspect of the way workers, clients, and citizens-at-large experience street-level bureaucracies is the conflicts that they encounter in wanting their organisational life to be more consistent with their own preferences and commitments...Street-level bureaucrats often spend their work lives in a corrupted world of service. They believe themselves to be doing the best they can under adverse circumstances and they can develop techniques to salvage service and decision-making values within the limits imposed upon them by the structure of the work. They develop conceptions of their work and of their clients that narrow the gap between their personal and work limitations and the service ideal. These work practices and orientations are maintained even while they contribute to the perversion of the service ideal or put the worker in the position of manipulating citizens on behalf of the agencies from which citizens seek help (Lipsky, 1980: xii – xiii).

Lipsky is important in the context of this thesis because by identifying the personal role played by public sector workers, they can be agents of change, not simple and neutral conduits for public service implementation. Lipsky realises that a macro-level study of policy intent will not reveal how the policy is itself implemented, and a study that includes the workers in front-line roles is needed to adequately understand public policy in action.

1.5.3 Addressing Absence in the Consideration of Devolution and Public Sector Reform

The absence of critical textual analysis in the consideration of devolution and public sector reform has created an identifiable gap in the literature which this thesis aims to begin to fill. In particular, the greater use of critical textual analysis in this thesis should be seen as complementary to the existing interview-based case study research. The addition of critical textual analysis to interview-based research facilitates the provision of a more holistic picture of multiple realities and a more complex understanding of devolution. Additionally, by using a case study approach that has a cross-border (or transnational in the UK context) remit but is based in Scotland, there is an opportunity to examine organisational discourse across nations within one public sector body.

Whilst there is a growing academic concern with devolved politics and policies, published academic research can sometimes struggle to keep up with the fast-moving political environment and changes of government. In this context, longitudinal research focussed on the embedded impacts of change become of greater significance. This research analyses public

domain texts over a period of three years, and examines interviews with public sector workers about their day-to-day work, again reflecting over a longer-time period - sometimes careers lasting many years. This allows the research to reflect on discourse over a longer time period and identifies more significant patterns and narratives than may present over a more short-term analysis.

1.6 The Research Questions

1.6.1 The Main Research Question

The limitations in existing research have created the gap that the main research question aims to address: 'How is public service reform discursively framed in Scotland and what are its underlying themes?' The extent of public service reform is unique in this Scottish context precisely because Scotland's public services have experienced the 'double reform' of devolution and public service reform. In this way, the experience of Scotland with the Twenty-first Century waves of public service reform was always going to be different and apart from the rest of the UK. This main research question is also referred to as 'discursive framing' in this thesis.

The main research question is concerned with the discursive framing of public service reform in Scotland because, in the crudest terms, it can be used to reflect on how this differs from the 'UK norm'. However, the concept of there being either a UK norm or a single 'Scottish' discourse will be further unpacked and challenged as unstable and contested, making a straightforward 'compare and contrast' more difficult.

Additionally, in Scotland we can expect to find UK narratives co-existing with Scottish narratives. This makes the use of a cross-border authority (CICA) of special significance because it can provide evidence of three dimensions of narrative (UK/Scotland/hybrid) due to the complexity of the organisation's reserved and devolved powers. Awareness of this complexity will provide a more sophisticated argument but this research question challenges precisely because discourses are slippery, subjective, multi-faceted and contradictory. This means that narrative findings may not be singular or clear, but are often inconsistent and confusing. In order to try and gain a deeper understanding of the way meaning is discursively framed, this research will examine a range of different texts. It considers both public documents and private interview discourses to provide a more rounded and deeper knowledge that considers the macro (central Government documents), the meso (organisational documents), the micro (individual interviews) and how they interrelate to each other.

1.6.2 Subsidiary Research Questions

In support of the overall research question, a number of subsidiary research questions are also examined. Firstly, 'Have the SNP administrations since 2007 managed to break away from UK Labour and Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition political constructs of reform?' Two successive SNP administrations have governed alongside both the New Labour construct of '*Modernising Government*' (Cabinet Office, 1999) and the coalition's construct of '*Open Public Services*' (Cabinet Office, 2012). This research question is also referred to as 'SNP divergence' in this thesis.

The second subsidiary research question which this thesis asks is, 'What are the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland and how do they diverge from UK narratives of public service reform?' This research question is also referred to as 'Scottish ideology' in this thesis. Part of examining this question is about recognising the plurality of ideologies and narratives at work and that there is no simple divide between Scotland and the UK, as the shared ideologies and narratives intermingle and cross-fertilise. There is another associated concept in literature of policy transfer – where policy ideas (or fads) migrate between states. For example, in a similar context, Birrell (2010) believes that there has been a great deal of policy copying of the British civil service reform by the Northern Ireland civil service, although the rationale and principles are different.

However, this question makes a key assumption that there is a difference in public service reform in Scotland and the UK, both in practice and policy implementation, and in discourse and understanding. This research further examines some of these fundamental differences.

Two further subsidiary research questions can also be added, both of which relate to the discussion in the following chapter. Firstly, 'Do Scottish and UK policy texts follow different 'plots' in their stories?'. Here, the notion of plot refers to the key milestones or substantive components of a version of events. This research question is also referred to as 'story plots' in this thesis. This question is asking whether story-tellers in different administrations construct their tales using similar or different building

blocks. The second subsidiary research question asks, 'Do Scottish and UK public sector staff interpret generic texts differently, and if so, why?' This research question is also referred to as 'staff interpretation' in this thesis. This last question pulls together the previous subsidiary questions and turns the gaze to the use of official texts by public sector actors. Could there be a difference in how different actors in different countries interpret texts? Could these differences be loosely aligned to the government administration they are working for? Or do actors behave independently and have their own motives for the rejection, absorption or translation of texts? Most importantly, it must be recognised that 'public sector staff' are not a homogeneous group. Even within the small number of interviewees, there will be differences of class, income and gender and it cannot be assumed that it is possible to generalise about 'public sector staff' as a unified entity.

1.6.3 The Research Questions in Epistemological Context

These research questions require methods of understanding narrative and discourse, identifying the employment of discourses in relevant texts, interviewing key figures and analysing these narratives to find patterns and themes that can aid our understanding. These approaches are predicated on a social constructionist or interpretivist understanding of the world. The world and its meanings are seen as open to differing interpretations and the notion of simple facts is rejected (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003). This rejection of a search for a single universal truth, allows research and analysis to be conducted in such a way that multiple meanings and truths can co-exist, reflecting individual experience, without

rejecting any data that does not fit within a simple framework. This approach is also influenced by Foucauldian perspectives on the nature and creation of meaning through language.

1.6.3.1 Foucault, Language and Power

The work of Michel Foucault has widely influenced a number of disciplines. He was an active researcher and writer in many areas including mental health, sexuality and ethics Foucault (1976; 2001; 2000). However, his works in relation to power and control, and the relationship of language to forms of authority (Foucault, 1994), are arguably the most influential, and continue to shape understandings of discourse.

To Foucault, language is more than a neutral tool: it is itself a practice that creates concepts and meaning (Foucault, 1994; Horrocks and Jevtic, 1999). In so doing, language is both constraining our understanding of the world and forming a site to contest meaning and create change in the physical world and its power structure. Foucault understood power as created, maintained and undermined not through physical or material force, but by discursive networks. These networks are themselves the power structures underpinning a community. In effect, it is the language that people use that forms and shapes their environment and their experience of that environment. This means that human knowledge of any phenomena is effectively 'constructed', and can thus be analysed by a manipulation and examination of language rather than a focus on material physical action or presence. From a Foucauldian perspective, knowledge and language are inextricably bound together. Historically and culturally

specific discursive practices organise, produce and reproduce different forms of knowledge.

Foucault rejected 'negative' notions of power and the conceptualisation of power as something that is unstoppably imposed by a single hierarchical point. Instead, Foucault imagined power as a dispersed and open resource possessed by individuals and by networks that is utilised and exploited for their own advantage. In this way, power and its universal potential can become liberating rather than oppressive.

In the context of this thesis, and following Foucault, the potential to use language and discourse as a form of control and resistance, provides a lens through which government and individual narratives can be explored. This theme of power and control through language runs throughout the thesis and is specifically addressed in Chapter Seven.

1.6.4 Findings and Myths

This thesis considers, discursive differences between Scotland and the UK. Where there is evidence of narrative and myths of difference, there is a consideration as to how this has developed and how dominant myths have been successful in achieving primacy. In particular, this thesis considers the possible overplaying of myths of difference and problematises this issue in understanding the discourses of policy-makers and public servants.

1.7 Outline of the Thesis

The following chapter 'Story-telling and Narrative' introduces key concepts and applies their use to the examination of public sector reform within a devolved context. This is proceeded by the methods chapter, which details the research methodology and forms of analyses used. A comprehensive consideration of ethical considerations and the limitations with the methods chosen are also outlined. The next four chapters are based on findings from the data analysis. The first of the analytical chapters is focused on findings from the analysis of policy documents from both the UK and Scottish Governments, and this is followed by a chapter analysing policy documents from the case studies analysed. This chapter provides detail on the case study organisations in the context of wider public reform and also discusses the public presentation of these agencies. The third analytical chapter takes the findings from these public policy documents and applies these findings to the interview analysis, searching for patterns and divergences. The last analytical chapter considers how individuals in the case study organisations have used narrative devices of absence in the deployment of power. Chapter Eight 'Conclusion and Final Reflections' looks back on the findings of the previous chapters and directly addresses each of the original research questions, providing conclusions based on the findings. Limitations and weaknesses are identified, including in the methodology used. This final section reflects on the overall research findings, discerning further research gaps and providing recommendations for future study.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the main themes of rapidly changing UK territorial politics and policy-making, devolution and public reform. In so doing, existing literatures have been explored and significant absences identified, which outline the literature gap which this thesis addresses.

Fundamental to the devolution project has been the ability to build understandings of nation, difference and identity, using discursive devices such as quasi-brands to promote unity or discord. The particular importance of *language* in the devolution project and public reform has been highlighted as key to how change is communicated, controlled and wrestled with. The use of discourse to construct understandings of a 'New Scotland' and what reform constitutes, is of paramount importance in situating the current settlement in context. This language is not an actor in its own right, but rather is operationalised, contextualised, given meaning and imbued with power by people – the staff of public sector organisations – who control how this language is used, adapted and translated. It is individuals who are both manipulated by, and manipulate, language, using discursive devices for specific means to achieve control and shared insights in a complex world. Simultaneously, public sector staff are subject to discourses of power, and also power-holders in their influence and work.

The following chapter introduces the key concept of narrative analysis which will be used in the research and explains how this forms a useful lens for the examination of public sector reform in a devolved context.

CHAPTER 2

STORY-TELLING AND NARRATIVE

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter considered the relevance of public sector reform to devolution, but highlighted differing interpretations of reform in Scotland compared with the rest of the UK. It was outlined that reform can be understood as a 'narrative', which provides a lens for examining how and why these differing interpretations are built. This chapter explores the notion of narrative further by explaining what narrative analysis can offer to researchers. There is a focus on the contested use of the term 'narrative' and how different literature has sought to define and operationalise what a narrative approach can provide. Within a complexity of understandings, this chapter aims to show how the narrative concept can be usefully applied to the analysis of public sector reform and devolution. This is done by examining the value of different approaches to narrative analysis and identifying key aspects of reform and devolution that lend themselves to a narrative approach.

2.2 The Value of Narrative Analysis and its Potential for Research

Narrative analysis can facilitate the deconstruction of text and language. Its' use in this thesis will be predicated on the assumption that there may be differences in Scottish and UK discourses to be uncovered. These differences include narrative analyses concerned with 'plots' (Llewellyn,

2001). The consideration of plots in government stories highlights the subjective nature of understanding and the tendency to place events and actions within coherent and linear stories that enable actors and story-tellers to explain and justify what is happening/happened within a familiar and easily understood structure. The use of policy texts for analysis allows a focus on the 'official version' of these stories. However, what narrative analysis offers is understood and operationalised differently by different researchers.

Imagining text and discourse as stories with narratives, plots and actors has a rich academic and literary tradition, but it is important to be aware that the notion of narrative is itself contested and is not unproblematic. A variety of writers have grappled to engage with what a narrative itself is. Llewellyn (2001) defines narrative as:

...a textual form in which events are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot...The construction of plot is considered as a distinct managerial task...discrete events are drawn together and worked into inter-related themes that share a common direction or thrust...[they] generate their validity by being engaging, establishing identities, defining points of success...fixing the directionality of a change narrative is viewed as a distinct accomplishment...it will be a 'cultural event' (Llewellyn, 2001: 36).

Llewellyn's definition can be used as a prompt to consider not only the plot of a narrative, but also the importance of establishing who is able to construct this plot and for whom they are constructing the plot. Maines

(cited in Housley, 2003) purports that 'narrative structures are formed by history', beginning with humans grappling for meaning in complex situations and developing over many years. This core understanding of narrative as a product of previous events is essential to the use of narrative in this thesis. At the same time, Jameson (cited in Condor & Abell, 2006) sees narratives as 'all-informing', giving meaning to events, categories, morality and identity. In using this definition it will be noted later that we must have regard for whose narrative is being employed. In this thesis, for example, it is important to separately consider the narratives of the management or the employees; the Scottish or UK Governments.

2.2.1 Key Differences in Understanding the Concept of Narrative

In essence, when discussing narratives, writers can be referring to one of two broad categories within the concept of narrative. Some authors, such as Llewellyn (2001), refer to something akin to 'storytelling': they are assuming that the narrative has at the very least an opening, a 'main story' and a conclusion. Llewellyn uses concepts associated with storytelling to understand the narrative, such as storyteller, audience and genre. Housley and Fitzgerald (2001) similarly approach the application of narrative from a story-telling perspective. They outline the parts of a story as opening, story and closing, with the main body of the story perceived as a collection of categories that facilitate the story. Housley and Fitzgerald use the important notion of 'request formats'. Request formats are a discursive device employed by the storyteller to structure the story to impart the information that they want to be heard. The storyteller does this by

consciously designing a conversational format of apparent turn-taking between story-teller and audience that will elicit their story. Housley and Fitzgerald also note how moral entitlement is granted to storytellers. The storyteller is assumed to have a privileged status as having lived experience or specific access to knowledge, allowing her to infer and achieve certain norms and morals.

Fischer (2003) concurs with the above interpretation of narrative, stressing that narration is story-based and not the same as general discourse. Using this definition, we can see how a narrative can be used to understand an organisation. Using a psychoanalytical framework, Gabriel (1999) argues that organisations carry unconscious desires and hopes, building on the work of Fineman (1996) that outlined how stories in organisations become a way to learn about life at work. From this perspective, in organisations stories express meanings and feelings. These stories become an indicator of what the storyteller remembers and thinks is worth re-telling.

2.2.2 Operationalising the Concept of Narrative in Research

It is apparent that narrative offers a clear approach to try to capture and analyse what is happening for an individual, a group and an organisation. But does the notion of story-telling always make a helpful contribution to research? Gabriel says:

I am concerned about the increasing tendency to view every sign, every snippet of conversation, every image and every cliché as either being a story or telling a story. At times, the concept of story

is stretched to encompass virtually everything that is not a fact
(Gabriel, 2000: 2).

When other writers are using the offering of narrative, they are referring to something much looser than necessarily a structured story, and with a definition more akin to general discourse as written or spoken communication. This is exemplified by McGarvey and Cairney, when they say that:

The dominant narrative of Scottish politics focuses primarily on its governing institutions (McGarvey and Cairney, 2008: 4).

In this context, the term 'narrative' is referring to narrative as language, rather than narrative as story. Whilst McGarvey & Cairney may be assuming that the narrative has a general direction of travel, they are often not using a story-based understanding to examine the text.

Between these two implied definitions of narrative, as story or as general language, there is a blurring of the use of the notion of narrative, with hints of the contested meaning leaking through. Writers who appear to lean towards one implied definition of narrative can also sometimes use the notion in a different sense. This can be seen in the work of Housley and Fitzgerald (2001) who tend to use a story-based concept of narrative. However, like Roe (1994, cited in Fischer, 2003: 6), they also conflate the notion of 'narrative' with 'argument':

After the provision of the story proper the speaker provides a closing utterance that includes a further description of what has been presented and contextualises the argument/narrative as something that is possessed by a recognisable collective (i.e. that is our worry) (Housley and Fitzgerald, 2001: Section 5.2 (no page numbers)).

This conflation of argument with narrative is explicitly refuted by Fischer (2003), who stresses the social element of narrative. For Fischer, the fundamental difference is that a narrative *can be used* to create an argument, but it does not necessarily constitute an argument in its own right.

2.2.3 Grand Narratives

To further disrupt understandings of what narrative offers, some theorists use additional concepts of 'grand narratives' or 'meta-narratives' to refer to dominant ideologies. Marston (2004) refers to grand narratives of 'progress', 'rationality' and 'truth' that ignore the multi-faceted reality and do not understand power. Grey (2005) outlines how 'change' is sometimes referred to as a 'meta-narrative' – a taken-for-granted depiction of 'truth'. However a problem with these analyses is that they are themselves open to similar criticisms, as those they offer. In particular, it is unclear how the dominance of grand narratives is established empirically.

It is clear that there are a range of contested understandings of the meaning of 'narrative'. It therefore may appear difficult to identify the value of the concept and how it could or should be used in this thesis. The

following section seeks to offer clarity on this point by examining how theorists have operationalised the concept of narrative and used it in data analysis. This will then offer a guide as to how this apparently ambiguous notion will be of value to this thesis.

2.3 Why the Use of Narrative Analysis is Justified

Despite the confusion with the core offering of narrative analysis, it is clear that many theorists have been able to use this approach to achieve insight and clarity in textual and language analysis. Llewellyn (2001) is particularly relevant for this study as he considers the impact of explicit storytelling narratives to propel initiatives, whilst considering the implications for modernisation. Llewellyn uses basic concepts of narrative storytelling in his examination of modernisation. He specifically reflects on the way narratives establish modernisation as a 'positioned category'. A 'positioned category' is a notion (Llewellyn cites from Sacks, 1995) referring to a way of attaching meaning to events based on the genre that they are placed in. He also identifies 'narrative building blocks' (such as the link between change and survival) which together form the 'master-story'. The 'master-story' is the dominant version of an organisation's history and is impressed upon its audience as the single way of understanding their institution. For Llewellyn, modernisation itself is founded on a basic notion of progress that needs a traditional enemy and lends itself to a narrative approach. He purports that stories in different organisations about modernisation frequently have the same structure: the imagery of the lost citizen [who needs modernisation for happiness], the citizen's quest [for a modern organisation] and a final triumph [of modernisation achieved].

Llewellyn considers that storytelling as a concept is now regarded as key to understanding intentional organisational change. The current organisation is located as part of a historical process, with a specific narrative implying the direction of change. Depictions of the past are accepted as fact and understandings of past and contemporary events then fit into this narrative structure, with stories having a constraining effect due to the assumptions they typify. Events that do not easily fit are perceived as 'problems'. However, these 'problems' may eventually change the narrative if they cannot easily be assimilated into the whole. In this way, although he does not acknowledge it, he seems to be employing a Kuhnian notion of paradigms (Smith, 1998) to how he describes narrative change, as the next section will discuss.

2.3.1 Kuhnian Paradigms

Kuhn originally used the concept of 'paradigm' to describe and understand the way in which change occurs in scientific schools of thought. A dominant paradigm or scientific approach is established based on certain identified scientific 'facts'. This understanding of scientific reality is self-reinforcing: research is designed to fit within this school of thought and findings or research that do not align with the paradigm are discarded or explained away. However, eventually alternative findings that are outside the constraints of the dominant paradigm are overwhelming. The governing view is forced to change or be replaced by a new paradigm.

This Kuhnian notion of paradigm appears to be mirrored in Llewellyn's work about how organisations experience change and modernisation. Llewellyn argues that modernisation is ideally suited to analysis through the lens of narrative because modernisation inherently embodies similar features to a narrative. He asserts that modernisation has "fundamental narrative aspects, implying movement from one state [of being] to another" (page 37). Llewellyn identifies narrative as a form of subtle control that limits meaning and practice for both the storyteller and the audience. Again, although this is not acknowledged as such, Llewellyn appears to sit within a Foucauldian tradition. As outlined in the previous Chapter, Michel Foucault has been highly influential in how many academics understand the nature and maintenance of power and control. Of most significance here is his concept of the 'panopticon'.

2.3.2 Foucault's Panopticon

Foucault (1994) idealised the concept of the 'panopticon' as a method to enable prison staff to centrally observe and monitor prison inmates without the need for overt or extensive control. Prisoners know that they are or may be constantly observed and this curtails their behaviour, without the prison staff being required to directly enforce rules. Llewellyn's employment of discussions of control 'at a distance' takes this traditional understanding of modern control mechanisms and applies it to contemporary society.

2.3.3 Resistance to Change

In addition to the above, Llewellyn also discusses resistance to change, which may be helpful to understand why some reform initiatives have failed. One 'problem' that can arise, according to Llewellyn's account is the re-emergence of 'old' practices within a new narrative, sometimes stemming from local resistance. On this issue he highlights the importance of people as actors in their own story rather than passive subjects. This contrasts with Jameson (cited in Condor and Abell, 2006). As previously noted, Jameson sees narratives as 'all-informing'. Llewellyn's work can therefore constitute a challenge to Jameson's view. From Llewellyn's perspective narrative is *not* 'all-informing'. People and action can exist outside narrative, shaping their own destinies sometimes in spite of, rather than because of, dominant narratives. Llewellyn explicitly acknowledges that 'managers exist outside the controlling aspects of discourse' (page 56), suggesting that there may be a version of self that is 'authentic' and exists outside discourse and its constructions. This suggests a distancing from Foucault's view of people as being created by discursive practices (Fischer, 2003). Foucault (Horrocks & Jevtic, 1999) argued that what we understand as 'reality' is constructed by practices to establish control and order. From this perspective, discourse can never be apart from 'reality': discourse creates the world and its people as we understand them.

Llewellyn's view of tension and loss of control by the dominant narrative provides us with a lens to consider why within the different case study organisations examined in this thesis, the narratives employed have

enjoyed or suffered different degrees of 'success'. The notion of 'failed' narratives is explored by Gabriel (2004). For him, organisations have narratives of great achievements, but also stories exist outside of the managed terrain of the organisation and challenge the official order. Gabriel outlines how, if a narrative is attempted to instil morality without sensitivity, then it will fail to engage. Sims (2004) also surmises that people will only feel passionately about their work if they see their own story and that of the organisation intertwined.

2.3.4 Emotionality and Organisational Change

The emotional requirement for effective narrative is examined by Gheradi (2004). She asserts that myths operate by creating social bonds. Work groups share passion and emotional understanding – transmitting this passion is a process for managing knowledge. Desire is socially constructed and a form of narrative knowledge. She refers to Frost (1999) as highlighting that the study of organisations needs to have concern and *compassion* for the people inside the organisation that they study. This compassion in researchers for the people that they study is seen as a tool for opening up human connections and enabling the importance and role of emotionality in working life to be better understood. Managers frequently seem to operate from a model that suggests personal involvement is essential to being effective at work and, therefore, experience based on knowledge and personal concerns are important. This work resonates with that of Wallis and Mcloughlin (2010) who identify a transformative myth of public service modernisation in Ireland. This myth has been successfully used by Irish public services to unite an elite group

of leaders who are 'change agents' for modernisation. The myth has also been moderately successful in giving this elite group authority over other policy actors, although Wallis and Mcloughlin identify increasing gaps and challenges to the grip of this authority.

2.3.5 Myth-making and Leadership

This myth of transformational leadership is, however, based on 'real' events where some individuals have appeared to achieve successful change. The 'myth', when believed, may have definable effects and in this way, may become more than a myth, and rather a phenomenon grounded in quantifiable experience. This myth (or phenomenon) of an elite group of leaders who are essential to the transformation of public service could also apply in other administrations and is of direct relevance to this study's focus on groups of leaders in the case study organisations. The following chapters will examine both emotionality and myth-making as central themes emerging within the narratives examined in the case study organisations.

2.4 Narratives and Myth-making in Organisational Literature

Llewellyn's examination of the role of narratives in organisational change and modernisation is also a site for concern by some organisational theorists. The distinct role of narrative in management is given formal stages by Birnbaum (2000) who identifies a set of idealised stages that management fads work through. These include 'The Narrative Evolution', when new narratives are bolstered and shared more widely, concentrating

on the benefits; and 'The Narrative Devolution', when the idea is subject to successful challenges and a new paradigm becomes dominant.

Robbins (2001) asserts that stories are based on true events but are a combination of fact and fiction – they contain a narrative about key decisions made by individuals that affect the organisation. Memories of former employees are turned into stories and shared with new employees (Fineman et al., 2005). Knowledge and meaning change as it is passed from person to person as stories, making narratives central to learning about an organisation. Facts turn into stories to help us understand and narrative knowledge explains how rules should be applied, retaining corporate knowledge. Fineman et al. purport that the current fashion for a 'lean' organisation means that there isn't adequate time or space for storytelling by employees. From this perspective the efficiency of the organisation is so great that all organisational and staff action is strictly focussed on production or service provision.

2.4.1 Narrative as Everyday Life

Despite a general persuasiveness of Fineman et al.'s work on efficiency, their arguments are presented without reference to an evidential basis. The assertion that organisations have been squeezed and made so efficient that employees no longer have space for the re-telling and re-fashioning of narratives, implies that story-telling is something that happens separately from the core work of the organisation. This understanding of narrative is rejected by this thesis. This research is predicated on a more Foucauldian-influenced approach whereby

discourse and story-telling do not sit separately from 'every-day life'. By examining text and discourse in interviews and public documents, there is an inherent assumption that narratives and story-telling are naturally present in all aspects of the organisation's work. The following chapters identify how these narratives appear in the explanations and views of staff, and the way the organisation is officially presented. Finding these narratives did not require a piece of research outside the organisation's everyday work. This research is based on a fundamental understanding of narrative as being embedded in an organisation's work, being influenced by and created by the work, with the narrative itself shaping which tasks are done and how.

2.4.2 Narrative and Intention

Just as this chapter searched earlier for clarity in the definition of narrative, there is a similar ambiguity over *intention* in the consideration of narrative in public service reform. What is sometimes unclear from these accounts of narrative in policy-making and reform is whether the narrative is 'just happening' or whether actors are consciously seeking to pro-actively create, resist or use a narrative. Marston (2004) provides an approach to the conscious use of narrative with his belief that if policy change is treated as a narrative, the policy analyst can identify ideal type actors' stories and metaphors that can transform policy plot, tensions and resolutions. Store (1989, cited in Fisher, 2003) identifies the primary types of policy narratives as decline/crisis and human helplessness/need for control, as providing the perceived imperative for policy change. Store's typology (and others) are a useful aid to data analysis as they provide

initial groupings that can be identified or rejected, and where applicable provide a way of interpreting and structuring research findings. The findings chapters of this thesis consider the applicability of these typologies to this research and its findings.

The preceding discussion considered how narratives can effect, or fail to effect change and modernisation. The usefulness of these considerations must be set against the earlier reflections on how different theorists understand and mobilise the very notion of narrative. It was previously outlined that there are two broad typologies in the definition of narrative: one around narrative as story, and one around narrative as discourse. Within this complexity and variation in the application of these concepts, there is now a further development of the discussion by more directly addressing how narrative analysis has and can be used in the deconstruction and understanding of devolution.

2.5 Using Narrative Analysis to Interpret Devolution

It has already been noted that Housley and Fitzgerald (2001) appear to favour an understanding of narrative as story-telling. These authors apply narrative analysis to the specific example of discussions about Welsh devolution (2001), offering a possible parallel for this thesis' concern with narratives of Scottish devolution and reform. Housley and Fitzgerald identify the recurrent notion of conflict in decentralisation and democracy prevailing in radio interviews with members of the public. Speakers used a story-telling structure, for example by opening their stories with the promise of something 'interesting'. They also provided closure, for

example by contextualising the narrative in terms of the collective interest. The narratives examined included the storyteller situating themselves as part of the category group, and inviting us to place ourselves with him. The audience is always omni-present and explicitly included in the narratives constructed.

Housley (2003) also examines artistic narratives as expressions of Welsh nationality. He situates artists as agents whose practices express themselves and in so doing provide discursive representations of the social organisation. Housley argues that there is a tendency amongst some pieces of visual Welsh art to try to present a consistent narrative of Wales, including that of national renewal and struggle against oppressors. However, he acknowledges that this approach is part of a contested set of realities that can sometimes silence artists whose work does not fit easily within the dominant meta-narrative, again mirroring but not explicitly acknowledging the Kuhnian paradigmatic approach.

For Housley, the identity of Welsh artists is diverse and fluid, and a Welsh narrative can provide these artists with an exploitable resource, a way of expressing difference from other artists by providing a marketable brand. He discusses contested collective positionings and tension within and between different narratives around universalism and particularism. The strong narratives form part of the debate for cultural decision making and can be used by legislators to construct chosen versions of events.

2.5.1 Situating Narratives

Although Fischer (2003) does not consider the relevance of narratives for devolution, his work can be read to broadly concur with that of Llewellyn. He discusses the importance of narratives and their situated rationality as the most important dynamic for policy change, assisting in interpreting language and political contexts, and providing actors with subject positions that define relationships and come to represent the policy situation. Fischer's work can be used to explain how narratives can form a valuable method of translating ambiguity and complexity into an easily identifiable sense of national identity – both by nationalists and unionists.

Two broad typologies were earlier established in Chapter Two, of those who see narrative as discourse, contrasted with those who see narrative as story-telling. Within this, writers who view narratives as a form of discourse have also tried to unpick the relevance of narratives for devolution. The perspective of theorists such as Paterson et al. (2004) became the dominant interpretation of devolution. This framed the devolution discourse as developing due to a conflict between the previous Conservative administrations (1979-1997) and assumed "Scottish values":

...A country of strong community ties, built around the inherited social institutions of its civil society, suddenly came up against a Conservative government that distrusted them in the light of its commitment to individual rather than collective autonomy...According to this view, the tension was, at least to a considerable extent,

resolved in the referendum on self-government in 1997 and, from 1999, the new Scottish governing system (Paterson et al, 2004: 153).

Notwithstanding the problems with this assumption about how the Conservative government might have viewed Scotland and its evidence base, the assertion that this conflict was resolved “at least to a considerable extent” will be challenged in the following chapters, where we will see traces, and sometimes bold expressions, of the continuing tensions between UK and Scottish Government narratives, alongside a legacy of Conservative government reforms.

Scotland’s assumed social democratic traditions and progressive national identity are purported to be a basis for narrative and meaning in policy by theorists such as McCrone & Keating (2007), although various authors identify weaknesses in any perceived core narratives, as exemplified by Keating (2007):

...Scotland...is certainly fertile ground for social democracy...This requires vision and leadership...Scotland's political parties have shown themselves seriously deficient here. Partisan politics rotates around point-scoring and short-term advantage, rather than presenting a vision of the country's future and identifying areas of agreement and disagreement (Keating, 2007: 281).

More generally, theorists who appear to conflate 'narrative' with 'discourse' can provide rich examples of relevance to concerns raised in this thesis about the language of devolved policy reform. One illustration of this is

found in Cairney (2007), who identifies two narratives in the smoking ban in Scotland (2006) – one that suggested that the ban was part of a continuum and one that constructed it as a radical break with existing political directions. He suggests that in order to reconcile these competing narratives it is necessary to pay attention to the wider policy environment, including the media, party politics and public opinion.

2.5.2 Categorising Narratives

McGarvey and Cairney (2008) identify three dominant categories of narrative in devolved Scottish politics – institutional, democratic and governance (as previously noted governance is also identified as a persistent strong narrative in government more widely – for example Newman, 2001). They claim that the democratic narrative is an academic narrative that has constructed the notion of a 'new' Scotland, gaining credence in the run-up to devolution. This is the construction that was considered in the previous chapter. McGarvey and Cairney then contrast this democratic narrative embedded in academia, whilst the governance narrative is a conventional and more widely used narrative. The diffuse nature of the governance narrative makes it difficult to study and it needs to be examined in terms of styles and broader narratives. Within this, the most dominant narrative is that which focusses on the institutions themselves – leading to a story based on institutions shaped by their past and a Scottish challenge to a unified British state. The democratic narrative stresses the relationship between the Scottish Government and citizens: institutions merely facilitate civic society who gives these institutions their mandate. This narrative demands greater participation

and transparency. McGarvey and Cairney suggest that the narratives compete with each other, but may be telling the same story with different emphases. Each narrative breaks down into further sub-narratives, which challenge the others and highlight the importance of academic engagement with 'the real world'.

2.5.3 Myth-making in Narratives of Devolution

Chapter One explored the use of language in the construction of the idea of a 'new' Scotland, not least in relation to claims about policy making, political change and the rhetoric of difference. Such claims to difference can be challenged, problematised and understood as myth-making, for example Edinburgh has the highest proportion of privately educated children in the UK (Guardian, 2009). This suggests that there may be the reproduction of a myth about the difference between Scotland and the rest of the UK, or at the very least that the significance of this construction is over-played.

Myth-making, sometimes based on elements of experience, is also evident in Stewart (2004b) who says that:

...devolution has nonetheless created, or, more accurately, perpetuated, a rather different welfare landscape north of the border...there are important administrative and sociological factors that again mark out Scotland from England, in particular. Part of the devolution arrangements, for instance, was an emphasis on consensual government. This built on a tradition of governance that

embraced corporatism, consensualism and centralisation and had adherents across the political spectrum...the historically rooted belief that the state, rather than the market, should be responsible for welfare provision and delivery is widely shared throughout Scottish society (Stewart, 2004b: 137 – 143).

Law and Mooney (2007b) argue that narrative analysis and the identification of myths can help to:

...distinguish between the rhetoric of reform and modernisation and... 'actually existing' reform and modernisation. The claims made by the government, politicians and policy-makers are often at odds with emerging realities (Law and Mooney, 2007b: 269).

Returning again to notions of a 'new' Scotland it can be hypothesised that these discussions have been important myths for nation building. Mooney and Scott identify an example of this type of myth at work in Fraser and Cusick (2001), cited in Mooney and Scott (2005: 5) who say that:

The English once fled to Gretna Green to get married in a hurry. Now there are other enticements drawing them north. Scotland is becoming a social magnet, attracting English people who want better care for their elderly, better university education with grants and no student fees, higher levels of hospital staffing, improved ratios of teachers to pupils in schools. And it's no longer a matter of taking the high or the low road north: Scotland just has better roads.

Mooney and Scott counter such an approach:

Such myths cohere around claims that in some ways 'the Scots' are more inclined to be collective, social democratic, egalitarian and that these inherent values that insulate 'them' against Thatcherism, now work to protect them from some of the more radical of New Labour/ Blairite policies...Scottish politicians, especially from the Labour Party, are not averse to drawing upon perceived ideologies and myths about Scottish civil society, particularly concerning its egalitarian and collectivist tendencies (Mooney and Scott, 2005: 5-6).

2.5.4 Narratives of Devolution in Flux

It is important to note that there is no single homogeneous discourse within Scottish narratives and in analysis of this type it would be expected to find traces of competing perspectives at work. Narrative tension and change can be due to the passing of time and developments by subsequent administrations. In considering the relatively new inclusion of cultural services in social justice agendas in Scotland, McCall (2008) found that whilst there were some continuities and similarities, that there has been a much broader shift in the discourses employed by the Scottish Governments from the New Labour rhetoric of social heritage and egalitarianism, to the SNP language of cohesion, solidarity and economic sustainability. In particular there has been a withdrawal of the terminology of social inclusion.

But narrative tension can also run concurrently within the same time period or pieces of text. For example, Mooney and Scott (2009) outline the uneven tensions running through both New Labour and SNP Scottish policies on social justice, which seek to reconcile competing narratives of Scottish social democracy and neo-liberal economics.

'Narrative' is clearly a fluid term, usually used in relationship to some sort of story or set of related constructions to serve a purpose – such as promoting the inevitability of change and modernisation. Two typologies on the use of narratives were established: in one narrative is akin to story-telling and in the other narrative is a form of discourse. In identifying which approach is the most useful, it should be noted that neither typology lends itself to improved understanding if it simply conflates narrative with either story or discourse. For the concept of narrative to assist with the creation of new or deeper knowledge it must offer something more than a different word for the same approach. The challenge in applying the concept of narrative to social research is to make it worthwhile – what does reading a discourse as a story reveal that a non-storytelling analysis overlooks? How can policy-makers and critics apply this knowledge? Can all discourses be shoehorned into a narrative/storytelling framework or should we be selectively using narrative approaches in discourse-based research? These are questions that this thesis will consider in subsequent chapters.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that rather than viewing devolution as a straightforward chronology of events, contemporary devolution can be

interpreted as the latest chapter of one of many stories about Scotland, its history and politics. Likewise, organisational reform can be understood within a narrative framework, consisting of agreed plots to achieve a certain vision of what reform has and will achieve. In Scotland, this story may contain elements of the contested versions of Scotland discussed in the previous chapter, such as the embodiment of a 'New Scotland'. Self-edited story-telling runs through everyday life. Actors constantly choose to manipulate and work discourses, bending and twisting to make sense of yesterday and today, and communicate what seems to be the most salient points in attempts to share possible futures. This work is so firmly embedded in the everyday that it is difficult to see and understand. This is where a narrative approach is of greatest value by helping researchers to gain a purchase on the story being told. The following chapter will expand upon the use of narrative analysis as part of a broader discussion of the methodologies employed in this research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This research considers whether in a devolved context, the space for the 'double reform' means that public sector reform is being translated differently in distinctive territorial and national spaces. This double reform is created by both a drive for general public sector reform, and by greater devolution, itself both part of public sector reform and a phenomenon in its own right. A multidisciplinary approach is used that draws upon influences from Foucauldian philosophical traditions, the sociological perspectives of Kumar (1978) and Bell (1967), social policy theorists such as Newman (2000; 2001; 2007) and Clarke (2004a; 2004b), social psychology imagining of discourse as typified in the work of Potter and Wetherall (1995), and the organisational theories of narrative examined by Gabriel (1995; 1999; 2000; 2004). This study examines texts from both devolved (Scottish Government) and non-devolved (UK Government) post-devolution public sector bodies. In addition, original data generated during semi-structured interviews with senior managers is analysed and examined using discursive and narrative analysis. Two case study public sector organisations that have undergone organisational change and reform are examined: one part of the UK government, and one wholly devolved to the Scottish Government. An organisation I was previously employed by (Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, CICA) forms the

UK case study, and an organisation I have an on-going relationship with in my current employment, Scottish Enterprise, forms the Scottish case study.

3.1.1 Epistemological Underpinnings

Chapter One established the research questions this study aims to address. These questions require methods of understanding narrative and discourse, identifying the employment of discourses in relevant texts, interviewing key figures and analysing these narratives to find patterns and themes that can aid understanding of devolution and public sector reform. These approaches are predicated on an interpretivist and social constructionist understanding of the world. Interpretivism grew as a challenge and eventual rejection of positivist scientific methods as inadequate to study the social realm (Murphy, 2011). Interpretivism highlights that interpretation is always required by researchers to understand why and how a social action is occurring. The related epistemology of social constructionism situates this interpretation within a focus on social context. Meaning develops and exists in specific constructions by social actors and phenomena.

Together, the approaches of interpretivist and social constructionist understandings present meanings that are open to differing interpretations, thus the notion of simple social facts is rejected (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003). The overall approach of this thesis is also influenced by Foucauldian perspectives on the nature and creation of meaning through language. To Foucault (Horrocks and Jevtic, 1999) language is more than

a neutral tool: it is itself a practice that creates concepts and meaning. In so doing, language is both constraining our understanding of the world and forming a site to contest meaning and create change in the physical world and its power structure.

A Foucauldian- influenced discourse analysis was especially relevant to this study, due to the importance of the notion of power. The interview participants were all senior leaders in their organisations and, at least to some extent, were able to significantly shape the internal reform agenda. Similarly, the public documents analysed represented the accumulated views of the most powerful voices and forces in the case studies.

3.1.2 Research Process and Thesis Construction

The research process was shaped by a Foucauldian-influenced approach. This process began with the accumulation of public documents and texts relating to the discussion and promotion of public service reform. These documents were selected through internet searches of government websites. Concurrently, I began to negotiate access to appropriate case study organisations (detailed later in this Chapter). Once the case study organisations were confirmed, further texts from these organisations were collated and the focus on relevant specific and general texts was intensified.

Although the details of the steps I took in analysing the data are discussed more fully later on in this chapter, it is worth noting here the iterative process that I took in the research process because this process is very

much reflected in the way this thesis is constructed. An initial narrative analysis of the published documents prior to conducting interviews in the case study organisations. This initial analysis allowed me to conduct the interviews from a relatively informed position and with some ideas of themes that may or may not emerge. After the completion of the interview phase I conducted more systematic narrative analyses on both the interview data and on selected published documents. These analyses resulted in the identification of preliminary themes. This first round of analyses focussed rather more heavily on the interview findings and the extent to which emergent themes could be traced or were absent in the published texts. This process signified the need to then conduct the same type of focused consideration of the published texts – as central texts – with the interview data then in the periphery. By moving the types of texts (i.e. published texts versus interview transcripts) into and out of central focus, it became evident that the documents being considered could be understood as three different ‘orders’ of textual material:

1. Meta narratives (general published government documents);
2. Meso narratives (specific published case study documents);
3. Micro narratives (case study interview transcripts).

The identification of different orders of narratives within the texts was, in effect, an interim finding or a key analytical step which then facilitated a more nuanced survey of the way different narratives ran throughout different kinds of discourse. A final further narrative analysis of the published documents was then conducted to re-check the earlier preliminary thematic findings and to consider the interplay (or absence thereof) between texts both within and between the two organisations.

These final analyses and the findings from them then formed the basis on which the main findings chapters (Chapters 4-6) were constructed. A further analytical chapter (Chapter 7) then presents the results of analyses that specifically focussed on the Foucauldian influenced themes of power and control. Although these are themes that run throughout the thesis, their consideration in Chapter 7 demonstrates their potential as acute lenses for new analytical insights, especially in relation to their capacity to shed at least some light on the idea of hidden narratives.

3.2 The Organisation of this Chapter

This chapter outlines the proposed research design that was used and its rationale. During the literature review phase of this project, four main problems arose that presented challenges for the research design. These interconnected problems were:

- How were Scottish and UK narratives of reform to be compared?
- How was a time frame for the research to be established?
- What was the central empirical focus?
- How did I acknowledge my own role as both researcher and practitioner in the research object?

In order to establish an appropriate research design, it was necessary to address each of the above issues. The subsequent sections of this chapter present the details of each of these problems in turn and discuss the way they were addressed and how they influenced the design of this research.

3.3 How were Scottish and UK Narratives of Reform Compared?

3.3.1 Context

The devolution process has been complex and sometimes contradictory, leading to competing discourses. Chapter 1 explained how even the nomenclature of government in Scotland since devolution in 1999, has variously moved through labels of Scottish Executive/ Scottish Government, as these different discourses have gained and lost ground. Discourses move far beyond simple labels however. The debates that required consideration for this study included the relationship of the Scottish civil service to the mainstream UK civil service, the impact of public service reform narratives on behaviour, and the cultural absorption of discourses by the Scottish Executive/ Government.

The rapidly moving focus on variable issues as typified in political churn inevitably expresses itself through discourses. It is by reading these texts that some understanding can be gained of the social meaning implicit in their construction. Policy texts are not fixed and are open to multiple interpretations and processes of translation, which means that the methodology employed for this study has had to recognise this complexity. Discourse analysis is one such tool for the absorption of policy texts and the operationalisation of these readings, as it can be used to bring policy understandings into alignment with other narratives of change, professional discourses and organisational visions.

3.3.2 Selection of Case Studies

Both case studies were selected using opportunistic sampling.

Opportunistic (also sometimes referred to as 'opportunity') sampling is identified by Brady (2006) as especially useful for gaining access to 'hard-to-reach' groups, in this case senior public servants. This type of sampling was facilitated by the specific knowledge and contacts of the researcher. This can be regarded as the weakest form of sampling, and potentially judged as the least onerous in terms of researcher skill and resource. Nevertheless, in cases where no sampling frame exists, this can be an appropriate method because it facilitates access that may otherwise not be possible and Brady asserts that it makes the research of a relatively covert group viable. A significant limitation of opportunistic sampling is that it is not possible to make generalisations about a study based on this sampling method (Brady, 2006). However this limitation is not a concern for this research, which is focused on contextually specific constructions and understandings, and is not based on an epistemological search for a universal 'truth'.

The use of CICA as the UK case study began when I was employed by them and therefore had automatic access to documents and an ease of understanding with regard to the change process underway. After leaving the organisation, continuing personal contacts and relationships allowed me a more ready access to senior staff for interviews than would have been possible otherwise. Personal relationships also facilitated access to interviews with Scottish Enterprise staff. With this organisation, my partner's contact with a senior employee provided the initial access for me

to speak to Scottish Enterprise directors. Subsequently however, a change in employment (approximately three years into the study) led me to work regularly with Scottish Enterprise and to work intermittently with one of my interviewees. The ethical dilemmas and the experience of being an 'insider' to the organisations I was studying were complex. These issues will be discussed in detail in the final substantive section of this chapter.

3.3.2.1 Case Study 1: The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA)

CICA provides financial compensation to victims of violent crime and is an Executive Agency of the UK Ministry of Justice. Although justice issues are devolved to the Scottish Parliament, CICA operates a single GB-wide scheme and receives 11% of its funding from the Scottish Government based on claims received. As a cross-border authority, this means that CICA needs to act in accordance with the policies of the UK and Scottish Governments, whilst being in the management line of the UK Government only.

CICA is based in Glasgow and employs over 450 staff. Its expenditure on compensation payments in 2011-12 was over £500m.

3.3.2.1.1 *Reform in the CICA*

I was Head of Policy in CICA between August 2008 – August 2010 and joined as part of the recruitment of a new cohort of senior managers who

came externally from CICA. My post, and those of most of my peers, did not exist under the previous structure and the creation of these posts was a deliberate attempt to introduce new management practices to the organisation.

Over the past five years, as with other government departments, CICA has undergone a wide-ranging programme of change and modernisation. It has relocated to a single site in Glasgow, driving down its administrative costs as a result. It has improved its turnover of cases and changed many of its internal policies. All of its senior management team has been replaced and the team has completely reorganised the establishment. This programme of reform and modernisation is as a result of criticism of the CICA, which has been publicly aired in the media and by the Select Committee of Public Accounts and the National Audit Office, based on evidence that CICA was inefficient and outmoded in its practices (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2008).

The high level of change and the pressure of public scrutiny made CICA an interesting case study for research into change in an organisation. By examining CICA it is possible to see changes expressed through the lens of the UK government's narrative of public sector reform, with an emphasis on discourses of efficiency. However CICA is also based in Scotland, following the closure of London-based offices to make financial savings. CICA is administering an aspect of policy which has been formally devolved to the Scottish Parliament and is staffed almost entirely by Scottish Government staff on secondment. Thus, prior to beginning the

research, I was aware that this would open up the possibility of traces of Scottish public sector reform narratives within the stories of its employees.

Finding a relevant 'Scottish comparator' organisation was difficult. The Scottish Arts Council appeared the closest comparator, based on its exposure to a fundamental change programme, public criticism and its key function in the granting of large financial awards. However, despite several attempts to gain access to undertake my research with the Scottish Arts Council, it was not possible to secure their support for the project. As a result, I instead identified and was able to successfully engage with Scottish Enterprise.

3.3.2.2 Case Study 2: Scottish Enterprise

Scottish Enterprise is an NDPB fully devolved to the Scottish Government, which like the CICA has experienced turbulent wide-scale organisational change. Scottish Enterprise aims to support economic growth in Scotland by supporting businesses to be more competitive and assisting in the development of key sectors. It covers the eastern, central and southern parts of Scotland, whilst its sister body, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, operates in the rest of Scotland. Scottish Enterprise is based in Glasgow but has a network of local offices around the country. It employs around 1,000 people and had a budget of £273m in 2011-12.

3.3.2.2.1 Reform in Scottish Enterprise

The SNP was highly critical of Scottish Enterprise when the Party was in opposition (Scottish Parliament, 2006). When the SNP formed the new government in 2007 they delivered a manifesto commitment by drastically reducing Scottish Enterprise's budget and driving through a number of changes as part of the Scottish Government's wider reform programme. A slimmer and more centrally controlled organisation now appears to have weathered the threat of abolition, although it is still under constant pressure to change how the organisation delivers services.

The main research question in this study asked 'How is public service reform discursively framed in Scotland and what are its underlying themes?' This question implicitly suggests that there might be a distinctive Scottish public sector narrative. Thus, a research design was required that would aim to capture this distinctiveness. If a distinctive Scottish public sector reform narrative exists, it may be expected to be at work in texts produced in the name of Scottish Enterprise, as they are wholly sponsored by the Scottish Government and will receive extensive exposure to Scottish Government narratives as part of their day-to-day work.

Comparing emerging languages from CICA and this 'Scottish' NDPB helped to understand how different inflections of the reform narrative were aligned, deployed and enacted. Attributing distinctiveness to differences between Scottish and UK institutional reform projects was problematic, but emerging policy documents provided a sense of the impact and effectiveness of the narratives employed.

3.3.3 The Selection of Documents

It was decided to focus on published policy documents because these policy documents contain the authors' final polished and considered narratives, in its most controlled form. Other texts such as speeches, Parliamentary statements, TV interviews and so forth were considered, but it was decided that these forms of data are more likely to provide only a snapshot of the individual speaker's thoughts at a moment in time and under pressured conditions and thus could include potential errors in intention.

For the UK and Scottish Governments, the main current policy text concerning public sector reform was selected, to give the most comprehensive presentation of government language and narrative. The Scottish Government's *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* document was published in 2007, but at the time of thesis submission was still their core text on public service reform as evidenced on their website. Similarly, the UK Government's *Open Public Services*, remains the core UK Government published text on public service reform in 2014.

For CICA, I selected their own published document concerning organisational reform. There was no similar published document for Scottish Enterprise so I selected their own main published document discussing their work and changing environment. It is important to recognise that these documents provide only an *indication* of narratives in use within a wider policy environment and changes of government. It is not

assumed that any document can provide a 'perfect' encapsulation of dominant narratives or that any text can be definitively proven to have influenced another.

Within CICA I had wide access and knowledge to a broader range of texts and my personal relationship to CICA initially influenced the texts that I examined. In order to promote objectivity I only examined documents that I was not directly involved in producing. I also decided not to use cut-off dates. This is because change processes and narratives are alive (Pettigrew, Woodman and Cameron, 2001) and to only examine texts from a partial time frame would have been a loss to the research. For each document examined the date of production was recorded in relation to my own employment and any non-direct influence recalled. This enabled a self-reflection on existing relationships to the text and its author/s. I included a note of who I understood the author/s to be and my organisational relationship to these author/s, for example by noting if any section had been drafted by one of my staff who may have been influenced by my own views on the subject. Following this process I decided to focus only on *The Way Ahead* to allow a more detailed analysis and consideration.

Despite extensive access to internal and draft documents in CICA, and to a lesser extent in Scottish Enterprise, only public domain documents were used. This was for two reasons. Firstly, it helped to guard against a 'lop-sided' piece of research, where the CICA study was far richer and detailed based on a wider range of texts. Secondly, it provided both organisations

with protection against unauthorised use of its documents and promoted trust in the research as engaging only with public domain documents.

3.4 How was a Time Frame for the Research Established?

Public policies are in a constant state of flux, moving and churning to respond to their changing environment and political drivers. This makes it difficult for research to distinctly link relationships between deconstructed narratives in text with stakeholder, staff and organisational behaviour. One way to attempt to contain and make sense of this fluidity is through the use of time limits for research and fixing an end point to analysis. In this piece of research all interviews were conducted over the course of a year, providing a fixed boundary of views, understandings and interpretations. No such timescale was attached to the textual analysis of documents however, potentially allowing the identification of roots and continuities of some of the views and understandings expressed by staff, and the impact of these discourses in later documents.

3.5 Empirical focus of the Study

3.5.1 Why Discourse Analysis?

The focus of this research is on language and its use in the devolved UK. Based on the traditions of the linguistic/interpretive turn, discourse

analysis can be used to examine public (and internal) documents to highlight issues of power, knowledge and language (Potter and Wetherall, 1995; Wood and Kroger, 2000; Woofit, 2005; Denscombe, 2010; Bryman 2012). These foci run parallel with the examination and evaluation of government and politics. The social constructionist basis of this project means that there is a fundamental interpretation of knowledge as socially situated. This refers to an understanding of knowledge and 'truth' as being created locally and culturally, being both subject to change over time and having a contested definition that is always fluid and unstable. This made some of the more traditionally social scientific research methods, such as a survey-based analysis unsuitable for this focus. Alternative qualitative methods, such as ethnography and autoethnography, were also considered, but because I wanted to focus more heavily on the way public sector reform and devolution were communicated and 'narrated' in a discursive sense, neither of these methods were deemed to be appropriate. In this thesis, it is the focused examination of the discourses variously employed, that helps to shed light on my research questions due to their capacity to reveal some of the tensions and contradictions running through the devolution settlement. Although, as subsequent chapters will reveal, the micro-narratives collected during interviews with senior managers sometimes reveal personal motivations and intentions, the main interests of this thesis could not be pursued through the observation of and reflection on actor behaviour.

3.5.2 Why Narratives?

Chapter Two argued that narrative is a contested notion that is sometimes loosely used to refer to a discourse (for example, McGarvey & Cairney, 2008), but usually used to refer more specifically to some kind of 'story' (for example, Fischer, 2003). Narrative as story telling opens up new understandings of change and modernisation, as it is used by individuals and agencies to convey cultural meaning and transmit norms and rules, lessons and warnings, and hopes and fears. However, it is suggested that this story-telling is not always a conscious manipulation and that over time, narratives legitimise the story's version of events. This normalising process is outlined by Baker (2006):

One of the effects of narrativity is that it normalises the accounts it projects over a period of time, so that they come to be perceived as self-evident, benign, uncontestable and non-controversial (Baker, 2006: 11).

Narratives construct the personal world, the social world, and how we understand them (Denscombe, 2010). Narrative text uses a wide range of linguistic devices to create this social reality, such as through the conscious or unconscious selective appropriation of textual material (Baker, 2006). The identification of narrative as a linguistic device can therefore provide additional knowledge about a text or discourse that assists our comprehension of intent and assumptions running through the minds of the author/s and audience.

3.5.2.1 How Narrative Analysis was used

The narrative found in the documents analysed and stories told by the interviewees did not emerge perfectly formed but have been seeded, shaped and re-imagined depending on the histories and context experienced and interpreted by the story-teller. Chapter Two outlined that this thesis rejects the notion of narrative as concepts that exist externally to an organisation's work. It is asserted that narrative is firmly embedded in the day-to-day and sometimes *is* the organisation's work. This thesis similarly rejects the use of 'narrative' as a substitute word for 'language' or 'discourse', as although theorists using the concept in this way have made a valuable contribution to the literature base, their contribution has not been enhanced by the use of the concept of narrative in such a broad and non-specific way. For the concept of narrative to be truly useful it must offer more than an interchangeability with 'language' or 'discourse', otherwise it has no intrinsic value of its own.

This thesis uses an understanding of narrative that broadly aligns with those who operationalise the concept through story-telling (for example, Fischer, 2003; Gabriel, 1999). This allows the mining of a rich seam of considerations and ideas around plots, actors and audiences. Additionally, if it is accepted that the word 'narrative' can never be fully conflated with the word 'story', then the use of narrative analysis is more than trying to find a way of shepherding all data into a story-telling framework. Imagining the discourse as a story provides a firm foothold for analysis but it can't fully complete the picture. Throughout this thesis it is acknowledged that

not all discourse worthy of consideration fits within a story. There will be textual analysis where the discussion is not within an overall story arc. This approach supports the argument that there are narratives, marching arguments, traces of discourse, and emotive and personal tensions that should not be misinterpreted, trivialised and forcefully shoved into a story-telling constraint - because they don't fit. These discursive and emotive tensions are not always separate from the broader narratives, and at times they work to supplement and challenge narratives. It is important to note that not all discourse has a narrative element and that it is through this more informed and subtle approach that the value of narrative analysis is realised. The consideration of the intrinsic value of narrative analysis and the problematisation of the boundaries of narrative text are returning themes in the thesis' conclusion (Chapter 8).

3.5.2.2 Triangulation

Discourse analysis is most frequently a solitary pursuit by a single researcher or very small group of analysts. By the very nature of discourse analysis, it is a single set on subjective interpretations that cannot be verified or 'proved' (Denscombe, 2010). This type of critique is based on a positivist approach to research and this thesis is not supposing that it can provide a single verifiable truth. However the acknowledged limitation of discourse analysis was addressed by using the appropriate complementary methodology of in-depth interviews. These interviews with key individuals examined the relationship of public text to the expressed

intentions and perceptions of the interviewees. In this way, different levels of discourse within organisations could be examined.

Interviews with senior staff within the two bodies discussed their use of language and how they saw their organisations fitting within UK and Scottish Governments' imaginings of public sector reform. This required particularly careful handling due to my own employment and the possible tensions and ethical considerations that could have arisen. It was vital that clear boundaries were established and that the terms of the interviews were agreed formally in advance with potential interviewees. My own role was as objective as possible and I sought to avoid 'clouding' by personal relationships.

3.5.2.3 In-depth Interviews: Sampling and Ethical Considerations

This specific part of the research gathered data on how actors within the discourse interpreted and engaged with the texts themselves. This was done through in-depth interviews with up to 4 senior staff from each organisation. It was decided that a small number of interviews was appropriate in order to allow for a very detailed examination of the data. Interviews were conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the British Sociological Association (2004) and held in public offices. In CICA, formal approval was required from the CICA Chief Executive with written consent also provided by each interviewee. In Scottish Enterprise contact was made through the Stakeholder Management Senior Manager, but

formal consent was granted by individual interviewees themselves. Formal written consent forms were used and a copy given to each participant. These forms provided details of the project's adherence to the Data Protection Act and explained that the transcripts and taped interviews collected during the research would be securely kept in my home for 5 years. Electronic files were password protected. No recompense was given to in-depth interview participants or deception undertaken. With regards to issues of specific ethical concern, conventional ethical guidelines on data protection and participant participation were followed. However, one area where I had to grapple with particular ethical issues was institutional relationships.

3.5.2.3.1 Institutional Relationships

I had existing work relationships with some of the in-depth interviewees and a formal relationship with all of the participants. This was managed through the formal information and consent process, but the civil service is a strictly hierarchical organisation and it was considered that this may influence the data collected. Participants may have related to me as the principal researcher with reference to my place in this hierarchy. However, it was not considered that the in-depth interviewees' participation or responses would have been influenced by their relationship to me. They were almost all hierarchically senior to me and it would therefore be culturally unusual for their participation or responses to be guided by a wish to appease or second-guess my own wishes or views. One interviewee was junior to me in the civil service hierarchy, but I was not in

this person's line management chain at the time of the interview or thereafter.

Although opportunistic sampling was used to identify the case study organisations, purposive sampling was used to identify the key directors of both organisations with which to hold in-depth interviews. These individuals were individually approached based on their lead roles in the promulgation of reform messages. They were approached informally to begin with and then sent a formal information sheet outlining the purpose of the research, their role and what they could expect from the research. Participants were informed at the beginning and the end of the interviews that they could withdraw from the study at any time and reminded of this when the interviews were scheduled. They were advised that if they chose to withdraw their associated data would be destroyed. Between the two case study organisations, there were seven interviews of approximately one hour each. These interviews were recorded and transcribed, and participants were provided with the opportunity to review the transcript further and change any part of the record. Participants were invited to contact me if they wanted to see a written report of the results of the whole research project. The final agreed version of the transcripts was examined for the data analysis.

3.5.3 Data Analysis

Discourse and narrative analyses vary from more traditional positivist and quantitative research methods in that these interpretivist approaches rely on subjective interpretation by the researcher rather than an agreed and

replicable structure for data analysis. Concern with this perceived weakness in qualitative research has led some practitioners and schools of thought to try and strengthen the analytical rigour of qualitative data. This is evident in approaches such as 'content analysis' and 'grounded theory', both of which have a concern with breaking text into quantifiable categories and codes (Denscombe, 2010).

However, applying strictly quantifiable methods removes the interpretive richness from data analysis and in my view undermines the value of qualitative research. Whilst attempting to differentiate between different forms of conversation and discourse analysis, Wooffit (2005) acknowledges that there is no single agreed way of undertaking any one of the many approaches to discourse analysis.

3.5.3.1 Data Analysis Approach Used in this Thesis

The approach in this thesis was based initially on Carrabine (2001) who provides a description of the practical application of Foucault's theories to documentary analysis. This provides a check-list for good practice as:

1. Select your topic
2. Know your data
3. Identify themes
4. Look for evidence of inter-relationships
5. Identify the discursive strategies employed
6. Look for absences
7. Look for resistances
8. Identify the effects of the discourse

9. Outline the background to the issue
10. Contextualise the material in the power/ knowledge of the period
11. Be aware of limitations

Carabine's approach was developed into a more specific framework to interrogate each document and transcript. This was:

- ⚡ Identify recurrent themes.
- ⚡ Identify words used most often. Run counts for each interviewee/ document and identify areas of discourse where these words are most likely to be used.
- ⚡ Identify questions/ issues that elicit the longest/ shortest answers in interviews (as a possible proxy for comfort with subject).
- ⚡ Determine sentence lengths and relevance (if any).
- ⚡ Examine use of specific and or similar adjectives and adverbs, including in place of nouns.
- ⚡ Note repetition of specific phrases or unusual words by different interviews/ documents from the same organisation as evidence of developed localised terminology.
- ⚡ Note which questions in interviews were unanswered either directly or indirectly.
- ⚡ Identify contributions made spontaneously rather than prompted.
- ⚡ Distinguish use of binary oppositions/ contrasts.
- ⚡ Identify contradictions within single interview/ document/ organisation.
- ⚡ Note absences – 'obvious subjects that aren't mentioned.
- ⚡ Determine recurrent and unique narratives.
- ⚡ Consider use of abstract/ metaphorical language.

- ⤴ Note use of or rejection of stereotypes.
- ⤴ Find references to emotion or use of emotive language.
- ⤴ Locate assumptions over agreement in undisputed 'facts'.
- ⤴ Have awareness of descriptions/ references to self (interviewee/ document author) and own role in change.
- ⤴ Identify the acknowledgement of different views to own (interviewee/ document author) and their description/ framing.
- ⤴ Note use of pronouns.

There was an initial exploratory manual paper-based data examination, highlighting points of interest. This data analysis was then worked through again to identify the strongest three broad themes emerging for each document or transcript analysed. There was then further re-examination of each text using Microsoft Word. Each document was turned into a word document and the search function in Word was used to count the different types of word used (for example pronoun use), the most recurrent words and phrases overall and in each document, and, answer lengths and so forth. This software-based re-examination did not identify any substantive new themes or findings, over and above those revealed by the paper based manual exercises. Moreover, this attempt to impose a more quantitative approach to the analysis did not yield the identification of any particular speech patterns or recurrent devices that could add a new way of understanding what has already emerged from the already identified, qualitative themes.

3.5.3.2 Data Not Used in this Thesis

Not all the themes identified are fully discussed in the analytical chapters. Some of the themes and findings were not connected to the research questions of this thesis, or were present in only one document or transcript and therefore did not seem linked to a wider organisational presence or approach. For example, one of the interviewees spoke movingly of personal disappointment and humiliation in organisational reform. I felt that this was the main theme of this individual transcript, yet it was a personal story that was not replicated in any other documents and interviews, which largely presented more positive pictures. This is briefly discussed in Chapter Six's examination of interviewee data but the full extent of this individual's experience is not completely relevant to this thesis.

3.6 How did I Acknowledge My Own Role as both Researcher and Practitioner in the Research Object?

A key concern in the use of these case studies is my own role as a former employee of one organisation, and current partnership working with the other, and the possible influence of this over any research findings. My role created the possibility for imbalance in the findings, wherein for example my understanding of the CICA study may have been richer and more nuanced, and based on a greater understanding and personal knowledge of the organisation. There is also the substantive challenge of overcoming personal views and experiences of both change programmes, whether I 'agree' with what the organisation is becoming and how I use my

'insider' knowledge to inform or distort a more objective reading of the texts.

Indeed, no research study is value free, especially those of the social world and particularly given this study's research focus. By undertaking any study, all researchers are engaging in an act of subjective interpretation about the phenomena before them. This applies to all research and whilst it can be noted with an attempt to mitigate against personal experiences overshadowing a useful interpretation, it is these personal and subjective interpretations that provide the richness of qualitative social research. Personal relationships to texts, narratives and agencies were recorded to portray the subjective nature of interpretation and experience as honestly as possible. Throughout the work it was important to maintain reflexivity and produce my own narrative on the research itself. It is also worthwhile to note that this thesis is itself a narrative shaped by my own personal researcher experiences.

However, this is not the first time a researcher has been faced with these kinds of dilemmas and the large existing literature base that already exists considering these ethical issues is discussed in the following section.

There now follows a detailed consideration of the potential conflict between my role as a civil servant, and that of being a researcher of the civil service. Using Becker's influential article 'Whose side are we on?' as a point of departure, there is a discussion of how I attempted to appropriately fulfil both of these roles. It is argued that the understanding that there are two diametrically opposed roles to choose between is itself flawed. A temporary conclusion is provided that *in principle*, inhabiting

multiple roles should not be a cause for concern, and could be a complexity that offers a depth and richness in understanding that can be difficult to achieve for 'outsider' researchers.

3.6.1 Whose Side are we on?

The seminal article by Becker 'Whose side are we on?' (1967) continues to inspire debate and challenge across the social sciences. Although Becker's intended meanings in the article are still contested (for example see Hammersley's critique of previous readings, 2000), the core dilemma over values and subjectivity in research is as valid a concern now than it has ever been. The complexity of trying to undertake useful social research has led some to embrace subjectivity and deliberate partisanship in research (for example, see Filkin and Naish, 1982), whilst others continue to argue for the importance of 'scientific' method in social research and the on-going relevance of value-neutrality as an aim (for example see Lincoln and Guba, in Bryman, 2012).

But Becker had an advantage over this author. Much debate over partisanship in the social sciences has been written from the perspective of an external researcher studying an organisation, community or set of individuals. Although some researchers may identify with the community studied or even temporarily act as a member, I had the added complication of being fully and permanently a part of the subject group.

I was studying an organisation where I was fully embedded as a senior member of staff within the subject group, and a further organisation that I

have an on-going relationship with. This raises tangled and thorny issues of subjectivity and essential questions around whose perspective I can and will take. Am I an impartial researcher? Am I a civil servant promoting the 'party-line'? Am I pretending to be either of these? What are my axes to grind? Whose side am I on?

3.6.2 Studying the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority

Jorgensen (1989) recognises that "People quite commonly develop scholarly interests and problems for study through ordinary participant involvements in daily life" (p31). Beginning work at the CICA happened at around about the same time I commenced my PhD study. Although my intention was already to study public service reform, the wholesale change at CICA provided me with an opportunity to use this change programme as a case study in my research. I have been open with CICA about my intention and successfully applied to have my tuition fees paid by my employer. But when I was applying to the Management Board for the payment of my fees I met with one of my first ethical dilemmas. How can I tell them about what I'm doing in a way that is honest and unthreatening, yet creates a clear relationship between my civil service career development and this research? At this point I entered the same space that is occupied by every researcher and their sponsor. How is it possible to undertake useful and independent research, whilst at the same time meeting the requirements of the paymaster? This issue was discussed by Sayer (2011) who highlights the difficulty of criticism in a world of social science shaped by a funding system that requires pre-defined outputs. Sayer purports that the way in which much critical social science is now

provided, is dependent only on descriptions of phenomena, kept neutral and action free to avoid offending potential funders.

I plainly shaped my case for financial support in a way that presented my work in the best light for CICA. I used key words such as 'benchmarking' that later horrified my supervisor, who pressed upon me the importance of 'not promising anything' to the CICA for fear of twisting the research and compromising my independence.

This points to the core dilemma that Becker's article is highlighting. Is my primary loyalty to the civil service or my own academic freedom? The Open University and the research community? If I want to say something critical about one of these organisations, will I just say it, or present a glossed version of it? And putting another twist on Becker's considerations, is there a primary loyalty *to myself* that maps outside of any of these organisations and the research community?

3.6.3 Pulled in Multiple Directions?

Other public servants have felt the tension of multiple loyalties between their employer, themselves and a wider population. In the late 1970s the 'London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group' were a group of public servants who critically viewed their state employer as expressly working to maintain capitalist economic and social relations and serve existing relation of power (1980). They instead sought to promote socialism or at least counter the hegemonic viewpoint in their daily work. This group expressed their frustration with the concerns of the state and outlined how

whilst they needed state resources, their access led to a defence of the status quo and their own implication in its maintenance. They sought to change this by actively dismantling negative state action as part of their day-to-day work, for example by rejecting managerial priorities, refusing official procedures and 'stepping outside the brief'. In Becker's terms, we could reasonably conclude that they were choosing to side with the oppressed.

My side taking is less straightforward. If there are two sides – civil servant or researcher - my primary loyalty is to the civil service. I am dependent on my employment to maintain my livelihood and financial well-being. By contrast, my PhD work is a piece of personal development that *may* assist my career and enables me to undertake challenging and independent work that provides opportunities for greater development of an additional set of skills and experiences. But by proclaiming a side and the reasoning behind it, I reveal a further identity and the side that I have taken – self-interest. Just as the London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group chose their side on the basis of political philosophy and a desire for change, so I chose my side on the basis of economics and a desire for personal stability.

In attempting to answer Becker's question and by claiming a position I have challenged the dichotomy and suggested that there are potentially three overlapping sides that can be taken (civil servant/oppressor, researcher/oppressed, self-interest). But on further examination, the creation of sides for me to choose between can be challenged in three other ways:

1. Lack of conflict between research freedom and paid employment
2. Complexity of lived experience
3. Complexity of researcher identity

These are examined in turn below.

3.6.4 Issues of Conflict between Research Freedom and Paid Employment

UK civil servants are bound by the Civil Service Code (Cabinet Office, 2009). Briefly, this requires that civil servants act in accordance with four core values of:

- Integrity – putting the obligations of public service above personal interests
- Honesty – being truthful and open
- Objectivity – basing advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of the evidence
- Impartiality – acting solely according to the merits of the case and serving governments of different political parties equally well.

Broadly speaking these principles align well with what we would regard as ethical research practice. Acting in breach of the Civil Service Code for my purposes may include for example, removing restricted material from the office and using it in my research, reporting private conversations at work without the speaker's consent, or making overtly political or personal attacks on individuals or the government in my research. But all of these dubious actions would themselves be in breach of the British Sociological Association's ethical guidelines, which my research is following. In

essence therefore, the space for conflict between my roles as civil servant and researcher are limited if I am upfront and honest with all parties and avoid what any 'side' would regard as inappropriate.

Prior to starting my current level of study, I had several years of experience studying the public sector whilst working within it, when I studied for a taught masters degree in social policy – also fully funded by my employer. This period concluded with a dissertation thesis critically examining the key public reform document in Scotland of the time, *Transforming Public Services* (Scottish Executive, 2006). The production of this critical conclusion could be interpreted as suggesting that at that time (2007), I had adopted a side 'against' government policy. However even as I wrote my dissertation, no attention was paid or concern expressed over my studies, and an offer to share my thesis with my manager was politely declined.

Despite the on-going contribution to my study costs in my current place of work, there has been no interest or intervention in my research so far by any member of staff, including my manager. Whilst working in CICA, we employed no staff in a professional research capacity: any research by the Authority was undertaken by unqualified staff in the relevant area of the business and my offers of assistance were refused, at least in part due to the distinctly separate 'Directorate' working that CICA employed. I suspect that my studies are seen rather like a hobby for me that has no direct impact on my employer's reform programme or our day-to-day work. In effect, this has meant that I have been free to write and discuss what I like

– an offer of a summary paper of my work for the Management Board of CICA has also been declined.

Bearing this in mind, it feels wrong to suggest that in critically examining the work of CICA I am 'against' the organisation or the civil service more generally. Rather, my employer has allowed a space for me to research and challenge the institution. This challenges the notion of distinct competing roles to choose between, and suggests that throughout the research process, the 'sides' have not been incompatible.

3.6.5 Complexity of Lived Experience

A second challenge to Becker's dichotomy is provided by methodological considerations, in particular the concerns of those undertaking participant observation. Participant observation has developed over the last two hundred years on the understanding expressed by Jack Douglas (1976, in Cassell & Symon, 2004) - that the best way of getting information about people is to share their experience.

The ethical dilemma over taking sides and impartiality is felt keenly by many researchers undertaking participant observation as they engage with those they are studying. Li (2008) describes her own experiences of studying female gambling and states that she addressed ethical dilemmas by participating in gambling as an insider and observing as an outsider. I would challenge Li's claim that there are two different roles that can be adopted in this way. Whilst it is understandable that researchers may strive for the insights that impartiality may provide, the roles that

individuals adopt can never be mutually exclusive and all researchers will take a little piece of themselves into every role they adopt. I do not believe that individuals can fully exclude different aspects of roles whenever they choose – roles naturally leak into each other. However if such an ability to inhabit mutually exclusive roles existed, this would certainly make a neat solution to some ethical dilemmas.

Jorgensen (1989) purports that people give their own meaning to life and interact with others on this basis. Researchers therefore need to understand culture and language to understand the insiders' world and focus on meaning from the standpoint of the insiders. Jorgensen rejects the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, appearing to suggest that some 'going native' in research may be necessary to experience life and meaning as an insider.

This 'blurring' of insider meaning with outsider understanding suggests that the two perspectives are not wholly separate, and that to understand the researched, there must be some fluidity between role boundaries. Proponents now reject the notion of 'subject' in favour of there being a 'dialogue' between researcher and the people being researched that enables them to work in collaboration together (Angrosino, 2005).

The movement away from clear and separate roles for the researcher and the researched challenges Becker's notion of choosing between oppositional roles, particularly in some contexts (there may be others where Becker's dichotomy fits more readily). In many contexts, it may be that thorough and careful research can break down the boundaries

between roles. In my experience as a career civil servant and as a PhD researcher, my roles were not in conflict as I worked to produce 'good' research. My lived experience allowed me to short-cut through decades of information and meaning, and to bring more nuanced understandings to the research, that would have taken an external ethnographer years of intensive observation and work to begin to achieve. I feel this particularly when reading descriptions by academics of aspects of my working environment. For example, I felt this for one of the first times when reading Donnelly's (2004) paper about the then Scottish Executive's internal reform programme 'Changing to Deliver'. The paper was well researched and detailed – but it must have taken the author considerable time to accumulate and understand the narrow window of information presented.

3.6.6 Complexity of Researcher Identity

Understandings of participant observation have led to the development of the term 'observation of participation' to refer to the researcher's critical engagement with their own participation within the method and the documentation of the researcher's own feelings and prejudices (Tedlock, 2005). The development of post-structuralism has challenged positivist assumptions about the identification and discovery of facts. Instead, facts are understood as theory-laden and based on social constructions. This forces the researcher to think about their own role in the knowledge produced (Hardy & Clegg, 2006). Examining the researcher's own role in the knowledge produced is often loosely referred to as 'reflexivity', which for some authors (for example Etherington, 2004) is interchangeable with a common understanding of 'reflection'. Although increasingly popular, the

use of the concept of reflexivity in research is not new. In the classic 1934 text *Mind, Self and Society*, Mead discusses the importance of reflexivity to promote self-awareness of the researcher's own impact on individuals and processes.

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) assert that it is the approach to knowledge that determines the worth of research, not the methods used. They argue that researchers should use reflexivity to link practice and theory and consider how their own interpretation of the research is shaped, avoiding both 'recipe book research' and 'theorising in a vacuum'. Cunliffe (2003) defines reflexive scholars as understanding that all forms of inquiry are 'paradigmatically circumscribed'. Claims to reality should be challenged and destabilised. Researchers construct meaning and truth based on their own personal characteristics.

Our own perspective is partial, so reflecting on this creates the possibility for more flexible and informed research that is sensitive to the power relations that have shaped it (England, 1994). Parker (1994) argues that the researcher should ground their research by mapping the study, the subjects *and* themselves. He asserts that it is the subjectivity in research that adds the value and depth to it. The complex subjectivity of the researcher and their interpretations can be funnelled through reflexivity to provide a richer seam of understanding. Etherington (2004) purports that reflexivity closes the gap between researcher and subjects, exposes the moral dilemmas of research and allows the work to be better validated by readers.

A reflexive approach challenges the notion of simple side taking because any researcher's personal identity and characteristics are so complex that to assume that they are working on one side only is to erroneously oversimplify. All researchers will be influenced by traditions, politics, peers, supervisors, friends, family and personal experiences. In this way my research is also shaped by numerous influences, and part of this shaping comes from long experience as a career civil servant and more recent influences in specific roles. This is not a limitation of the research, provided I document these perspectives and seek to identify where this has influenced the research produced. In this way the research can be richer and more transparently understood than if I try to claim impartiality where this is not possible.

The notion that meaning and identity can be easily sliced into two sides, overlooks the complexity in any social situation where there are always likely to be multiple issues at work simultaneously. Derrida (in Collins and Mayblin, 2011) discusses the tendency to create binary oppositions of concepts as a way of making sense of a complex world. Applied here, we have constructed our understanding of partisanship in terms of either overtly taking sides or being completely neutral. Becker constructed his explanation in terms of either siding with the oppressed or the oppressor. This suggests that I can choose between siding with the oppressed and being *against* reform and modernisation, or siding with the oppressor and being *for* change.

Within the civil service the notion of different 'hats' is also commonly used (Indigo Business, 2014). This suggests that we can choose to adopt

different roles and behaviours at different times and actively move between them. I would argue that the social world is more fluid than this and there are no two identified sides that we can either identify or choose to compartmentalise ourselves within.

Side choosing for me cannot be vacuum packed into one of two binary oppositions. Like all people, I have a complex identity muddled up with personal loyalties and politics – not a neutral and easily defined role as either civil servant or researcher. To tease out just one dimension of this, part of my official civil service identity includes union membership and recent industrial action. This highlights that there is no single side to take and even as a civil servant I am at once worker, change agent, change subject and manager, simultaneously inhabiting roles created by reform and individual circumstance.

3.6.7 Concluding Remarks on Whose Side I am on

Using Becker's discussion of side taking as a departure point to consider my own perspective on working as a civil servant while studying the civil service, organisation change and discourse, I highlighted personal ethical dilemmas in identifying with different identities and have looked at various ways of unpacking this.

The 'gift' of working in an organisation undertaking fundamental reform has led to important questions and lessons learned about how I frame my research within these organisations and communicate about it. I have reflected on my roles and loyalties and outlined that if I am forced to

choose, then my choice is one of self-interest that does not clearly map with Becker's identified roles.

However, I have gone on to discuss why I feel that this apparent side choosing can itself be challenged as overly simplistic, misleading and unhelpful. Firstly, my own experience is not one of tension between my studies and my paid employment. I have concluded that key parallels for research ethics are akin to key concerns in my role as a civil servant. Secondly, the complexity of lived experience makes fluidity and understanding of meanings between researcher and the researched a positive attribute, rather than a binary of opposing forces. And lastly, a recognition of the way in which all researchers shape and influence their own findings highlights that through reflexivity, research is enhanced by a documenting of personal position, rather than by misleadingly claiming neutrality or an objective side-taking.

A number of years before writing 'Whose Side Are We On?', Becker himself recognised that personality traits are "situational in their expressions rather than...stable traits possessed by individuals in greater or lesser degree" (1958: 66). Sides, roles and interpretations change over time, meaning that for me the key dilemma is not 'whose side I'm on' but how to adequately explain the multiplicity of roles and complexity of feelings about the research I'm undertaking.

Reflexivity requires us to "take a leap into a constantly shifting ocean rather than studying organisational life from the security of the shore" (Cunliffe, 2003: 999). It would be much easier for me to be understood as

hero or villain, researcher or civil servant, on the side of the oppressed or on the side of the oppressor. But these easy categories cannot adequately capture what is happening. Whilst the 'constantly shifting ocean' of an ambiguous researcher identity is problematic to understand, it provides a wider and deeper set of knowledges and understanding, ultimately offering more fruitful and engaging research.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the main decisions that have been taken in the design of this research, including the selection of case studies and texts. This research is predicated on understandings around the construction of meaning influenced by Foucauldian perspectives and utilises discourse analysis to interpret devolved and non-devolved public sector reform. These embedded assumptions around how knowledge is constituted have been used to unpack the difficult research questions created by the subject matter.

The forthcoming analytical chapters juxtapose this discourse analysis with narrative analysis of the data from in-depth interviews. This approach provides a more balanced set of conclusions through the use of triangulation. At a macro-level, these methods and the findings that have been elicited add to our knowledges about public sector reform in the devolved UK. At a meso- level, this is then understood at an organisational operational level. Finally, at a micro level the findings provide rich insights into how individuals interpret and make sense of the world around them,

frequently by using familiar narratives to communicate their understandings.

CHAPTER 4

PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM IN SCOTLAND AND THE UK: IDENTIFYING META-NARRATIVES IN GOVERNMENT PUBLIC DISCOURSE

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the narrative framing of public service reform in the public domain by the UK and devolved Scottish Governments. It examines key policy documents that ultimately demonstrate significant differences in how the respective governments utilise discourses to explain and justify reform. The analyses reveal limited evidence of the alignment of discourses and narrative between these central governments and suggests an early finding of evidence of Scottish distinctiveness.

To explore the question surrounding the distinctiveness of Scottish difference in policy-making, the chapter begins by critically analysing the key Scottish Government text *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* (2007), an early publication by the nascent SNP Government, and the analysis establishes the distinguishing features of narratives of reform within this document. These narratives are then compared with the reform narratives present in the Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition's *Open Public Services* (Cabinet Office, 2011), the key UK Government text on public service reform, in the same period

This concern with meta-narratives and their translation directly addresses the main research question regarding the discursive framing of public service reform in Scotland and also the related subsidiary research questions regarding SNP divergence and from constructs of reform and the forging of a Scottish ideology.

The key literatures that the chapter's findings will engage with are those that variously outline, evidence and refute notions of the 'New Scotland'. Chapter One provided a detailed analysis of theorists who have found substantive difference in the Scottish policy environment (Paterson et al., 2004; Stewart, 2004a; Poole and Mooney, 2006), leading to claims of the creation of a 'New Scotland' (Hassan and Warhurst, 2002; Bechofer and McCrone, 2007). However, the notion of a 'New Scotland' has been problematised (Mooney and Scott, 2005) with some literatures identifying powerful *converging* trends in Scottish policy-making (Watson and West, 2008; Law and Mooney, 2012). The evidence presented will confirm that the Scottish Government appears to employ different rhetoric about public sector reform than the UK Government.

4.2 Analysing the Scottish Government's 'Renewing Scotland's Public Services'

This chapter begins by explicitly exploring how public sector reform is discursively framed in Scotland. To do so, an examination of the key policy document about public service reform, 'Renewing Scotland's Public Services: Priorities for Reform in Response to the Christie Commission' (Scottish Government, 2007) is undertaken. This is firstly set in context

within the Scottish Government's wider aims and reform goals. There is then a critical textual analysis of the document, beginning with the cover and working through each main section in turn. Finally this section will summarise the key findings from the analysis and their significance in the construction of public sector reform by the Scottish Government.

4.2.1 Setting 'Renewing Scotland's Public Services' in Context

The current Scottish Government (2011-2016) has 16 'National Outcomes'. These 'National Outcomes' represent a description of what the Scottish Government wishes to prioritise in its work and are loosely based on aspects of government devolved to the Scottish Parliament. Some outcomes are reasonably specific and measurable within a single discipline ("We live longer, healthier lives"), whilst others are more ambiguous and difficult to quantify ("We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society"). The final National Outcome, "Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs" (Scottish Government, 2014a) is broadly aimed at the process of public service reform.

The key published text that sets out the Scottish Government perspective on public service reform and how it will meet this National Outcome is 'Renewing Scotland's Public Services: Priorities for Reform in Response to the Christie Commission' (Scottish Government, 2007). Although this document is now over 6 years old, it remains the most comprehensive and important published text in setting out the Scottish Government's vision for public service reform. Four 'pillars' of reform are constructed:

- a decisive shift towards *prevention*;
- a greater focus on 'place' to drive better *partnership*.
- investing in *people* who deliver services through enhanced workforce development and effective leadership.
- a more transparent public service culture which improves standards of *performance*.

This construction of public service reform remains the Scottish Government's current reform priorities and building blocks at the time of writing, as depicted on the Scottish Government's website (Scottish Government, 2014a). These pillars now tend to be expressed as the 'Four Ps': prevention; partnership; people; and performance.

4.2.2 Examining How 'Renewing Scotland's Public Services' is Framed in Scottish Government Discourse

Renewing Scotland's Public Services' title reveals constructions that are important for the discursive framing of reform in Scotland. Firstly, the title does not use the word 'reform': this is only introduced as part of the subtitle 'Priorities for Reform in Response to the Christie Commission'. In the front cover presentation of the document this subtitle is clearly de-prioritised, appearing lower on the front cover and in a smaller font size. Sociological and discourse theory argues that the 'framing' of text and communication organises and structures understanding (Goffman, 1974; Tannen, 1993). In this document, the use of the word 'renewing' as a substitute for 'reform/ reforming' is an active or subconscious choice to frame change as for the purpose of revitalisation. For the text's reader, this creates an understanding of change as imperative and logical, rather than

as happening for reasons that could be contested, such as due to political ideology or resource constraints.

The word 'renewing' itself also destabilises the image of reform as change. 'Renewing' implies a re-establishment of a form of the previous state: a resumption of a fresher version of the status quo. This reduces the ability of the proposals to be understood as different or separate to the current state. Rather the proposals are framed as better and more modern forms of the public services that already exist, and therefore the proposals are constructed as less unusual or challenging. This also linguistically aligns the Scottish Government with New Labour's depiction of modernisation. Chapter One of the thesis detailed New Labour's consistent use of adjectives that are a variation on 'modern' (Clarke and Newman, 1998; Finlayson, 1998; Fairclough, 2000). Whilst some of these adjectives indicate a break with the past ('new'), most encompass a meaning predicated on a rejuvenation of the status quo ('refresh'). This framing was also used widely by the previous Scottish Labour/ Liberal Democrat coalition administration (1999 – 2011), for example in the 'Fresh Talent' graduate visa scheme (Scottish Executive, 2005). The current Scottish Government's choice to align this aspect of their narrative with the previous UK New Labour administration and the Scottish Labour/ Liberal Democrat coalition administration, indicates a rhetoric that aligns with existing discourse and situates itself within this stability of understanding, rather than seeking to completely disrupt and redefine.

More specifically, a 'renewal' additionally aligns with the SNP's preferred rhetorical construction of an independent Scottish state based on a

continuity of current existence, rather than the building of new and different arrangements. The above analyses on the signifying characteristics of 'renewal' are further evidenced in Scottish Government discourse around what is termed the 'six unions' of the UK. The Scottish Government asserts that the UK has six unions comprised of political and economic union, the EU, a defence union, currency union, a union of the crown and a social union. It states that in an independent Scotland, it is only the political and economic union which will be broken, with the other five unions within the UK continuing (Scottish Government, 2013b). The use of a rhetoric of continuity over claims to substantive change is also evidenced in preparations for the legal basis of an independent Scotland. The fundamental approach to the legal underpinning of independence is based the 'Continuity of Law' principle (Scottish Government, 2014b), which means that in very broad areas of law, an independent Scotland would automatically adopt existing UK practice as the default position.

The second point of note from the title is the use of the reference to 'public services' [emphasis added] rather than the alternative 'public sector'. This noun clarifies that the document's scope includes the provision of public services by those outside the public sector, more specifically the private and third sectors. This locates the scope squarely within wider reforms that have led to the delivery of public services through non-public organisations (Clarke, Gewirtz and McLaughlin, 2000a; Flynn, 2000; Grout, 2008). The literature outlines the increasing privatisation of public services and the tendency for government to frame this change as being in the interests of service users (who will receive a better and more

customer focused service) and the general public (who will benefit from the provision of more efficient public services).

The document's title explicitly includes the word 'Scotland', which is compounded by a cover background of a rippling Saltire (Scottish flag) and a further Saltire in the lower right hand corner as part of the Scottish Government's branding, as shown in the following illustration.

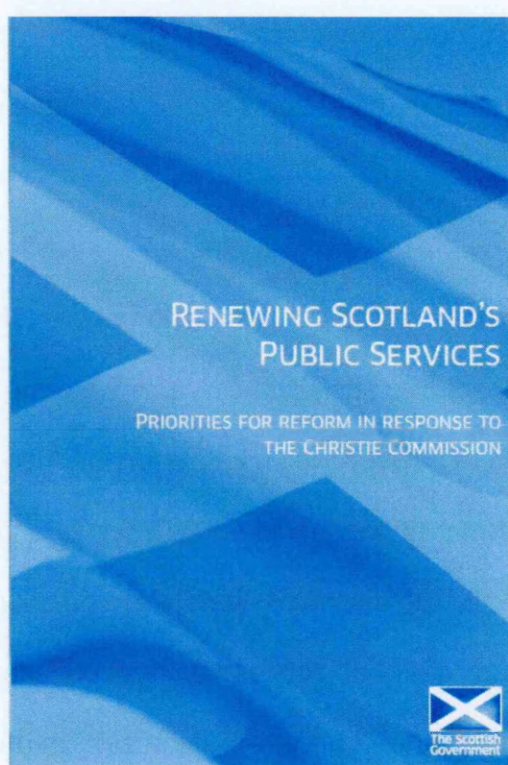


Illustration 4.1: Front Cover of Renewing Scotland's Public Services

This double Saltire use combined with the double Scotland reference (Scotland's, Scottish) leaves little doubt as to the importance of an explicit understanding of these proposals as being intertwined with notions of what it means to be specifically Scottish. These public sector reform proposals are being explicitly associated with symbols of Scotland and related understandings of Scotland as a distinct nation state. This 'Scottishness'

as a national identity is discursively prioritised over any other theme or subject in the cover of this document (including public service reform), suggesting that the reader will find the document content as specifically Scottish. This aligns with Lury's (2004) framework of brands outlined in Chapter One, and provides evidence that the Scottish Government are consciously using brands and labels to strengthen and construct understandings of the nation-state of Scotland. This also concurs with Chapter One's outline of the work of Beland and Lecours (2010), who assert that nationalist movements frequently use policy development as a vehicle for the promotion of the nation-state as a discursive concept.

Examining the framing of *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* through its cover presentation has revealed a manipulation of branding and language to construct a document that assists in conceptions of nation-building, aligning with theories of social policy as a means of understanding devolution, nationalism and national identity (Mooney and Williams, 2006; Beland and Lecours, 2010). However, the cover's discourse remains firmly rooted in both existing reform objectives (such as privatisation as a vehicle to deliver public services through the private sector) and narratives of reform (linked to past history, rather than breaking from it). This appears to situate the Scottish Government's discursive framing within literature identifying the key elements of *UK* public service reform (Hood, 1991; Clarke, Gewirtz and McLaughlin, 2000b; Newman, 2001).

4.2.3 Examining How 'Renewing Scotland's Public Services is Legitimated

Renewing Scotland's Public Services follows a familiar pattern to that set by most formal UK government policy publications (for example *Modernising Government*, 1999) by beginning with a Ministerial statement and apparent seal of approval, accompanied by a smiling photograph of the lead Minister. This Ministerial endorsement both communicates the importance of the document (suggesting that it is a government Minister's work) and that the Minister is taking responsibility and ownership for the content.

The foreword explains the context for the document:

Last November, the First Minister asked Dr Campbell Christie CBE [ex-STUC General Secretary] to lead the Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services.” (Scottish Government, 2007: 1).

This context setting is not neutral: ownership is again claimed by the Scottish Government through reference to the First Minister as establishing the review, while the importance of the review is repeated by using the titles of *Dr* and *CBE*, stressing that this has been conducted by an intelligent (*Dr*) and high-achieving, important (*CBE*) individual.

The foreword goes on to state exactly what the reforms are:

Our approach closely reflects the key themes and aims of the Christie Commission's report. It is built on four pillars:

- a decisive shift towards prevention;
- greater integration of public services at a local level driven by better partnership, collaboration and effective local delivery;
- greater investment in the people who deliver services through enhanced workforce development and effective leadership; and
- a sharp focus on improving performance, through greater transparency, innovation and use of digital technology (Scottish Government, 2007: 1).

These headlines of reform are slightly opaque however, (for example – a “shift towards the prevention” of what? What is being prevented?) and the whole document must be read for the audience to gain an understanding of the reforms proposed. This suggests that the document is not intended to have meaning for a broad audience who will not fully engage with the whole document, as there is no attempt to condense and summarise for the casual reader. Rather, the intensity of tone and full attention required to absorb the text indicates that the authors are seeking legitimacy from a small audience of public policy professionals through an authoritative and serious emphasis.

4.2.4 Protecting Scotland from the UK Government: 'A Decisive Shift Towards Prevention'

The first substantive pillar of reform examined by *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* is 'A Decisive Shift Towards Prevention'. This section of text establishes an important set of rhetorics underpinning Scotland's public service reform.

Over the course of this Parliament [2007 – 2011 at the time of the document being published] Scotland's public services will make a decisive shift towards prevention and take a holistic approach to addressing inequalities. This focus is essential to address the current squeeze on the Scottish budget, tackle persistent inequalities and ensure the sustainability of our public services in the longer term.

The sustainability of Scotland's public services is challenged both by the austerity measures imposed by the Westminster government and by longer-term structural trends in the demand for public services. Demand for many services is being driven higher by a combination of demographic factors – linked in particular to the improving health and life expectancy of our older population – and the negative legacy of persistent inequality that results from the policy failures of previous decades.

As a responsible Government, we believe it vital to the future sustainability of our public services that we take swift action to:

- accelerate progress in building prevention into the design and delivery of all our public services;
- focus support in the first few years of life where we know it can have the biggest impact in improving life chances for the most vulnerable in society;
- unlock resources currently invested in dealing with acute problems;
- tackle inter-generational cycles of inequality and pockets of disadvantage that blight the life chances of some of our people; and
- better utilise the talents, capacities and potential of our people and communities (Scottish Government, 2007: 6).

There are a number of intended meanings that readers of this document are intended to draw out from this section of text: a rooting of reform within addressing inequality; an emphasis on Westminster maltreatment of Scottish interests; and a lens of Scottish difference from the rest of the UK. These meanings are conveyed through the narrative framing and discourse used.

Firstly, this section of text roots reforms within 'addressing inequality', using the word 'inequality' four times in just this short section and utilising similar nouns such as 'disadvantage'. Importantly, there is no explanation of what 'addressing inequality' means, for example by relating the type of inequality being discussed to class, gender, ethnicity or any other type of inequality. This ambiguous framing allows readers to interpret this section differently and find agreement from a broader audience. However,

depending on interpretation, this framing of reform as part of a concern with promoting equality supports the discussion in Chapter One of this thesis, that considered Scottish 'difference' and the assertion that Scotland has a more welfarist and public service orientated approach.

The second tonal point of note on this section of text is the political identification of UK government deficiency or mistreatment of Scottish interests, leading from the narrative of inequality already established and implying that Scotland is an unequal part of the UK. This is stated both directly ("The sustainability of Scotland's public services is challenged... by the austerity measures imposed by the Westminster government...") and indirectly ("Demand for many services is being driven higher by...the negative legacy of persistent inequality that results from the policy failures of previous decades.") The use of UK government failure as a justification for reform compounds an understanding of this set of reforms as both imperative for Scottish goals and as uniquely Scottish. This in turn, strengthens a framing of public service reform as "Scottish solutions for Scottish problems" (First Minister Donald Dewar cited in BBC, 1999) and the notion that the UK Government is not able or willing to address Scotland's needs. The framing of the UK Government's 'policy failures' as a driver for independence, features in existing literature to a limited extent. In particular Mooney (2014) cites the austerity policies and welfare reforms of the UK Government as being a specific fault line highlighted by the Scottish Government as an approach that would not be adopted in an independent Scotland.

This reading of the text clarifies that the use of UK Government failure as a justification for reform does not only build an understanding of the imperative of Scottish goals and difference, but aims to gain government legitimacy through the use of discursive devices. This further supports the narrative work of the Ministerial endorsement of the preceding section.

This discourse analysis indicates a desire by the Scottish Government to establish a political legitimacy for an independent nation-state through claims to difference from the rest of the UK. In this reading, Scotland is in a marginalised position with a distinctly welfarist approach that is inadequately serviced by the UK Government. The UK Government is established in this narrative as an oppressor who abuses their power over Scotland. The Scottish Government's lack of authority over key areas of policy is constructed as an argument as to why greater Scottish powers are necessary. Using a Foucauldian influenced analysis (Horrocks and Jevtic, 1999), *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* is a contested site where meaning can be shaped that can change the physical world and its power structure. This site provides an opportunity for actors to support and challenge existing hierarchies. The SNP's political constructions and calls to a 'New Scotland' are being used in conceptions of nation-building (Williams and Mooney, 2008), as was discussed in Chapter One. This nation-building is endemic to the discourses and narratives employed throughout the Scottish Government's projects and is clearly evidenced in *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* depiction of public service reform. This deployment of nation-building is consistent with the narrative employed in the second pillar of reform discussed in the following section.

4.2.5 Only Scotland can Deliver Effective Place-Based Services:

'Greater integration of public services at a local level driven by better partnership, collaboration and effective local delivery'

The second pillar of reform discussed in *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* is 'Greater integration of public services at a local level driven by better partnership, collaboration and effective local delivery'.

Evidence clearly demonstrates that improved outcomes for people and better use of resources can be achieved when local services are planned and delivered through effective place-based partnership and integrated service provision (Scottish Government, 2007: 10).

Place based services as a distinct strand of reform again helps to consolidate a discourse located in the promotion of Scotland as having interests that are different and somewhat unique within the UK. This focus on local place-based delivery and planning as being best, supports the ideology that the geographically distant 'Westminster' government cannot deliver for Scotland as effectively as the Scottish Government.

The promotion of place-based services disrupts understanding of the UK state of union being the dominant national identity for British (including Scottish) citizens. A place-based rhetoric strengthens an implication that Scotland's place is only within Scotland, and not within the UK, reinforcing the construction of the UK Government as irrelevant and 'other' to

Scotland and Scottish interests. This concern with place also prioritises the nationalist discursive framework over specific public service reforms. Just as the cover of the document prioritised the Scottish Saltire and the linguistic 'Scottish' descriptor over imagery or descriptors related to reform, this section of the document de-prioritises discussion of specific reforms as secondary to the main 'pillar' of place based delivery.

This construction reinforces the importance of Scotland as an independent provider of public services but based on a different narrative to that of the first pillar ('A Decisive Shift Towards Prevention') discussed in the previous section. Whilst the first pillar predominantly based a claim to Scottish Government legitimacy on UK Government oppression, this pillar of reform bases Scottish claims to authority on calls to a natural competence created by a more locally-based delivery of services. This construction highlights the importance of the situated rationality of narratives (Fischer, 2003). The narrative has a clearly identified rationality (that local place-based public service delivery is best) that is presented as logical, but which is situated within a certain political context. The narrative boundaries are fluid outside of this specific context (for example, why not town-based service delivery instead? Is UK service delivery not place-based compared to international delivery?). The rationality of the narrative is based on the silent presence of Scotland as the place-based aspirational nation-state for public service delivery.

4.2.6 The Valuing of Public Sector Staff: 'Greater investment in the people who deliver services through enhanced workforce development and effective leadership'

The third pillar of reform is focused on 'Greater investment in the people who deliver services through enhanced workforce development and effective leadership'. The document has an extremely strong rhetoric on the value of public 'sector' (and it is of interest to note that this section no longer discusses public 'service') staff:

Reshaping public services... must be an inclusive and collaborative endeavour involving the workforce at all levels.

The expertise, energy and creativity of the public sector workforce will help to shape our evolving programme of public service renewal and improvement. We want all public servants to have the opportunity to have a say in how their organisations operate and be encouraged to contribute ideas about how improvements might be made.

We recognise the contribution of the many thousands of public sector workers whose commitment to their valuable work has continued in spite of tight settlements and actions to restrain pay.

Maintaining employment in the public sector is crucial to ensuring Scotland's economy is well placed to recover from the global downturn...We are committed to enhancing the capability of the

workforce and will continue to invest in workforce engagement and development...We will encourage effective management and strong employee engagement at every level in every workplace. By working in this way we aim to maximise productivity, raise job satisfaction and promote improved well-being across the public services workforce (Scottish Government, 2007: 13).

Although there have been workforce tensions and industrial action within the Scottish Government (BBC, 2014), a rhetorical strengthening and valuing of public sector workers *as a reform goal of its own*, constructs a Government narrative of sympathy and loyalty with public sector workers. This provides evidence of the contested specifically Scottish public sector ethos discussed in Chapter One by Paterson et al. (2004), Stewart (2004a) and Poole and Mooney (2006). Just as the previous section prioritised place-based service provision over clearly defined reforms, this section prioritises an explicit commitment to public sector workers ("The current No Compulsory Redundancy agreement has given many public sector [emphasis added] workers economic stability and job security...", p13) over any named public service reform.

This rhetoric of valuing public sector workers brings the analysis back again to considerations of whether Scotland is fundamentally different to the rest of the UK. Rhetorically, this third pillar of reform indicates that the Scottish Government is firmly committed to supporting and valuing public sector workers. However, it is important to note that rhetoric is not the same as action, and from this perspective some literature challenges the

understanding of Scottish distinctiveness with respect to a public sector ethos (for example, Mooney and Scott, 2005). Whilst it is clear that this section of *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* works to establish a rhetoric of support for public sector workers, it is the forthcoming discussion of the case-study data (in Chapters Five and Six) that will examine whether this rhetoric is reflected within the public bodies themselves. This potential within the narrative for tension and difference is more explicitly present in the discourse of the final pillar of reform discussed in the following section.

4.2.7 Disparate Notions of Reform and Competing Voices: 'A sharp focus on improving performance, through greater transparency, innovation and use of digital technology'

The final pillar of reform examined is 'A sharp focus on improving performance, through greater transparency, innovation and use of digital technology'. This strand of the document's discourse is perhaps the most difficult to easily define and clearly explain. The chapter discussing this final pillar of reform ('Improving Performance') is fluid and opaque, containing high level concepts that could be considered as ubiquitous to any competent organisation.

We will encourage a stronger and more reliable set of approaches to public service improvement through an improvement framework that emphasises the importance of the following:

- clear aims;

- improvement priorities designed explicitly to achieve those aims;
- transparent measurement of progress and benchmarking;
- building stronger improvement capability; and
- spreading innovation and best practice across the public sector

(Scottish Government, 2007: 16).

This chapter in the document can be regarded as the only section that prioritises reform and public service performance as an end goal in its own right, and not as framed by, and secondary to, an ideological perspective. Unlinked discourses, specifically “openness and transparency” and “digital public services” are grouped together, suggesting competing voices and authors at work. Whilst theory has established that various voices will frequently be at work within a single piece of text (Fairclough, 2010), the result is a confusing presentation of only a flavour of priorities, rather than a coherent narrative.

The diversity of content in this single pillar of reform makes the identification of discourses complex. Indeed, it is this complexity that suggests potential contested sources of power at work, with an effort to cram various secondary objectives into a single pillar. The de-prioritisation of these aims into a single omnibus objective highlights the relative importance of these goals compared to the content of first three pillars of reform. The dominance of the discursive content of the other pillars of reform puts ‘reform’ in context: a secondary goal to the wider independence project. In this respect, the narrative content of this final

pillar can only be understood in its subservient relationship to the other prioritised pillars of reform.

4.2.8 Summary of *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* Analysis

Analysis of *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* has provided a rich seam of narrative content to address the main research question. It has been shown that six underlying themes were of critical importance:

- Consistent calls to Scottish nationality and the virtues of a Scottish nation state.
- Appeals to competence and authority.
- A desire to protect Scotland from the UK Government.
- Support for the delivery of place-based services.
- Valuing of public sector staff.
- A more generic support for reforms that will improve performance.

It is evident that the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland include reform being sited within the independence project, rather than as a set of standalone changes to fix specific public service delivery problems. The prioritised pillars of reform are framed in *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* as a shift to prevention of problems, place-based delivery and valuing public sector workers. The omnibus pillar of reform covering a diverse range of actions to improve performance is secondary to these priorities.

As has been shown in the above analyses, in the presentation of these pillars the Scottish Government has effectively utilised a range of discursive devices that together construct a particular narrative of Scotland. There is a clear depiction of Scotland as different, in terms of needs, in terms of policy approach, and in terms of what Scotland the nation can provide by way of public services to its citizens. This difference is presented within a rational context, where place-based services are naturally best, and by way of contrast to an unsympathetic and distant UK Government. Utilising this framing allows the Scottish Government to stake claims to authority and national identity as part of public service reform.

Chapter One of this thesis identified the potential for the Scottish public sector to experience the 'double reform' of devolution and public sector reform. This analysis of *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* indicates that rather than double reform acting as destabilising phenomenon within Scotland, it has created a space that the Scottish Government has been able to exploit to undermine the political settlement. A devolved Scottish Government has had the resources to themselves use public service reform as a method of making further and deeper claims to political legitimacy. In this way, double reform facilitated work to destabilise the UK Government and strengthen the Scottish Government's authenticity.

Beland and Lecours' (2010) theory that public policy can be used by nationalist movements as a nation and identity building tool comes alive in the examination of *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*. Their work

argues that policy can be a tool to facilitate nation-building and in the case of *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*, it is evident that the policy of public service reform has provided an opportunity for the Scottish Government to further embed and build notions of Scottish difference from the rest of the UK. Within the four pillars of reform, three work to differentiate Scotland from the rest of the UK and its Government. The fourth omnibus pillar of reform, containing the detail of reforms that could be made, is demoted to secondary status, while the real work of nation-building is prioritised. In New Labour's imagining of public sector reform, devolution was a part of the wider project of modernisation, constitutional and governmental reform (Cabinet Office, 1999). However, the SNP have turned this prioritisation on its head: public service reform is only a small part of the project of building the nation-state. This finding is further highlighted when compared with the UK narrative approach, as discussed in the following section.

4.3 Analysing the UK Government's Open Public Services White Paper

The preceding section has gone some way to answering the research questions about the discursive framing and ideological features of public sector reform in Scotland. To provide comparative contrast to the trajectory of Scottish public sector reform, as evidenced through *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*, it is useful to consider a key UK Government public sector reform document from within a similar time period. In doing so, the analyses aim to address the question of how the ideological

features of public service reform in Scotland diverge from UK narratives of public service reform. In addition, the analyses in this section of the chapter also consider the ways that the SNP administrations since 2007 managed to break away from UK Labour and Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition political constructs of reform and whether or not Scottish and UK policy texts follow different 'plots' in their stories.

It will be explained that the document examined does not fit within a context of broader published aims of the UK Government. There is then a critical textual analysis of the document, beginning with the cover and working through each main section in turn. Finally this section will summarise the key findings from the analysis and their significance in the construction of public sector reform by the UK Government.

4.3.1 Setting Open Public Services in Context

The UK Government in power in 2014 does not have a set of national outcomes akin to the Scottish Government and consequentially it is not possible to easily compare the respective government's overarching objectives. It is an interesting point of note that the Scottish Government has chosen to explicitly publish an outcomes based approach and measure progress towards this, whilst the UK Government has not. However, the UK Government priorities for public service reform are set out in the *Open Public Services* White Paper (2011).

4.3.2 Examining How 'Open Public Services' is Framed in UK Government Discourse

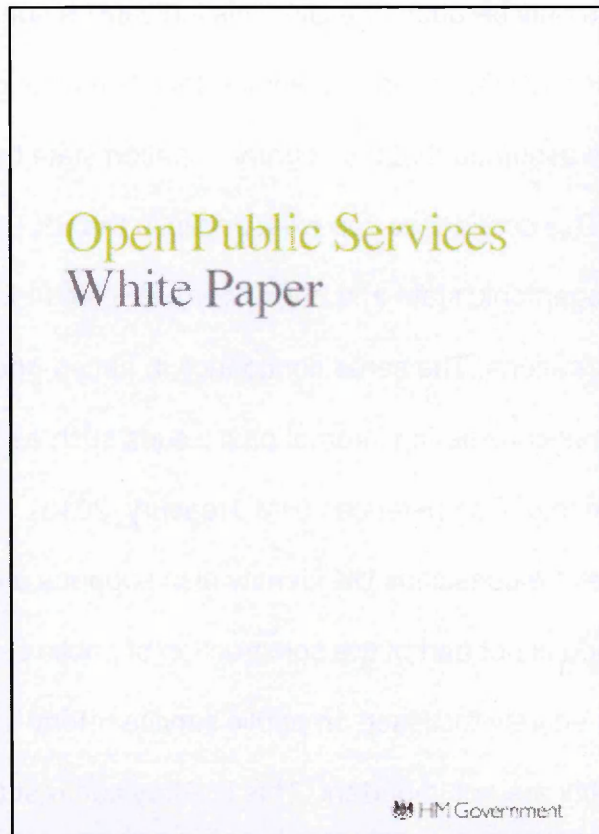


Illustration 4.2: Front Cover of Open Public Services

Just as the cover of *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* provided a narrative in its own right, so the cover of *Open Public Services* also uses clear discursive devices, which can be compared and contrasted with the Scottish approach. Firstly, there is one significant continuity between the two documents. *Open Public Services* mirrors *Renewing Scotland Public Services'* headline concern with public services rather than the public sector, again clarifying the focus on a mixed economy of public service provision (Clarke, Gewirtz and McLaughlin, 2000b) and the possibility of privatisation. The most striking contrast between the documents is the

Open Public Services absence of an explicit reference to the UK or any explicit notion of nationhood as such: it is simply assumed that the discussion could only be about the UK. This indicates a confident UK Government narrative that does not require definition of its boundaries or nation state: it is assumed that the country or nation state being discussed is self-evident. This confidence can exist because the UK Government is the dominant hegemonic state and does not need to self-identify in relation to other nations. The same confidence in nation-hood is seen in similar documents considering international issues such as the EU Budget Review of Balance of Competences (HM Treasury, 2013). However, the explicit absence of a conscious UK identity also supports a narrative where nationhood is not part of the construction of public service reform :the narrative is entirely focussed on public service reform and discussions of national identity are not important. This is a key contrast to the narrative employed by *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* and related to how *Open Public Services* seeks legitimation from its audience.

4.3.3 Examining How *Open Public Services* is Legitimated

The silence of explicit references to a national identity does not mean that a national identity narrative is entirely absent from this cover page.

Discourse analysis theory argues that the subject matter of analysis is more than just linguistic and the 'the whole package' can be examined (Clarke, Lewis and Gewirtz, 2000a). Whilst *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* used the symbolism of the Saltire to drive a nationalist based understanding of reform predicated on an understanding of Scotland as

'different', this document's sole non-linguistic signifier is the UK Government's royal crest, replete with Latin motto. This national signifier is a clear sign of authority, power and tradition. It supplements the portrayal of government confidence and hierarchical dominance. It also explicitly, yet subtly, includes Scotland (represented by the Unicorn in the crest), even though the publication of *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* demonstrates that the Scottish Government judges public service reform as a matter within their own remit.

The UK Government narrative of tradition and power is further consolidated on the front cover with the statement:

Presented to Parliament by the Minister for Government Policy by
Command of Her Majesty(Cabinet Office, 2011).

This further underlines the significance of power and tradition. It tells the audience that the contents of this document are so important that they were presented to Parliament. There is no statement as to which Parliament is being referred to. It is assumed that there could only possibly be one Parliament being discussed – that of the UK. Furthermore this short piece of text impresses upon the reader that the contents are so important that a Minister was involved, and that royal authority is important to the author/s and should be important and impressive to the readers too.

The only additional adjective or descriptor used in the title is 'open'. This word therefore becomes the core essence of how this Government wishes to frame its approach to reform – towards 'openness'. 'Open' implies the binary opposition of 'closed' and in so doing creates a seemingly unassailable discourse. The positive discourse of openness is contrasted with the negative connotation of public services being 'closed'. The creation of the implied binary opposition of 'closed' appears indefensible and constructs this absent opposition as indefensible. The narrative of openness is by contrast reasonable and self-justifying.

The rhetorical narrative prioritisation of 'open' is undermined by inherent contradictions in the document, for example by charging a cover price of £15.50 (although it is free to view online). The decision to restrict ownership of hard copies through cost (the Scottish Government issues hard copy documents for free) can be perceived as suggesting that this is not for a general audience and pricing is therefore justified. This does not align with a rhetoric of openness however, and the document content that stresses accessibility and public focus. Although the price could also be construed as an efficiency measure to avoid waste and cover printing costs, this does not resolve this essential contradiction between a professed priority to be 'open' and the use of pricing that will restrict access. *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* took a different approach: whilst not overtly making meta-claims to openness or transparency, the document had no price and the inside cover stated that it was a web only publication. It may be argued that this more modern approach may also restrict access to those who are familiar and able to use the internet.

In *Open Public Services*, although nationhood is formally absent from the front cover, the UK based assumed understanding of nationality and nation-state has an explicit absent presence. Inside the cover page, the positioning of the devolved administrations is discussed in a context that clearly seeks to situate the devolved administrations as subordinate to the UK Government:

We believe that more open public services can benefit everybody in the UK and that finding ways to deliver better services for less money is a challenge that is common to all four nations of the UK. The scope of this paper is UK wide, but in devolved areas of policy it is for the devolved administrations to determine their own approach to public service reform. The three devolution settlements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are all different although, in general, services such as health, education and those provided by local government are under devolved control. If you live or work in any of the devolved territories and are in any doubt as to which of these reforms would apply there, the relevant territorial office will be able to advise you. We are committed to working in partnership with the devolved administrations to share good practice and to explore whether our approach would suit their particular circumstances and need (Cabinet Office, 2011: 2).

Although this section is ostensibly neutral in tone, there is a subtext of dominance and superiority: "We are committed to working in

partnership...to explore whether our approach would suit their [the devolved administrations] particular circumstances and need.” This sentence reinforces that the UK Government is wholly authoritative. Whilst the devolved administrations may adopt the UK Government approach, there is no suggestion that this may be a two-way process whereby ‘working in partnership’ could result in the UK Government learning from the devolved administrations. Similarly, there was no expectation in *Renewing Scotland’s Public Services* that any part of the proposals could or would be adopted at a UK level.

In a similar manner to *Renewing Scotland’s Public Services*, *Open Public Services* begins with a Ministerial foreword. Reflecting the complexities of the UK coalition administration and the importance of projecting a shared vision, the foreword for *Open Public Services* is endorsed by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister. Whilst a Ministerial endorsement can be interpreted as communicating the importance of the document, endorsement by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister may be assumed to imply that the work of this document is as important a priority as any other work of government.

Claims to power and authority are strongly framed in *Open Public Services*, both explicitly (references to the Crown) and implicitly (by subjugating the role of the devolved administrations). When considering *Renewing Scotland’s Public Services*, it was concluded that the Scottish Government had used the document to further their narrative of nation-building. *Open Public Services* also utilises a basic framing that explicitly and implicitly asserts UK national sovereignty. References and signifiers of

the Crown stress *UK* authority and indirect dominance of the devolved administrations highlights UK superiority. As outlined in Chapter One and earlier in this chapter, Beland and Lecours (2010) identified that public policy is used by *nationalist* movements as a nation-building tool. This analysis of *Open Public Services* builds on this theory to evidence that public policy can also be used for nation-building by *unionist* movements or *existing states* too. In this way, nation-building through policy is not just the preserve of nationalist movements seeking to disrupt and re-fashion the status quo: dominant actors can also strengthen the state and defend it through the careful use of narrative in policy-making. This defence and strengthening is at work in *Open Public Services* in the narrative around equality.

4.3.4 Prioritising a Rhetoric of Equality

The foreword of *Open Public Services* establishes one core narrative of addressing inequality as the rationale for public service reform. Although the document goes on to discuss other issues of reform, the introductory framing is very clear that all the text that follows fits within the overarching aim of addressing equality issues. This rhetorical prioritisation is important because this was also a key theme in *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*, and in terms of this thesis' concerns, issues of equality and fairness have been asserted as part of what constitutes Scottish difference from the rest of the UK (Paterson et al., 2004; Stewart, 2004a; Poole and Mooney, 2006).

There is an overwhelming imperative – an urgent moral purpose – which drives our desire to reform public services. We want to make opportunity more equal.

Our society is blighted by the persistent failure to extend equal opportunity, dignity and worth to all. Inequalities in access to good schools, decent healthcare, safe places to play, culture, sporting opportunities, good nutrition and so much more leave our society less free, less fair and less united.

Because the forces which restrict opportunity for some inflict an injury on all. The failure to educate every child to the maximum of their abilities is not just a moral failure to accord every person equal worth, it is a piece of economic myopia which leaves us all poorer. For in a world rendered so much more competitive by globalisation, we can no longer afford to leave talents neglected. Every pair of idle hands, every mind left uncultivated, is a burden on all society as well as a weight on our conscience.

And, as with education, so with housing, healthcare, civic space and sporting chances. Denying our fellow citizens fair access to these goods weakens the bonds which keep our nation together, infringes the basic dignity of our fellow citizens, and holds us back in the global race to excellence (Cabinet Office, 2007: 4).

The text works to create a strong narrative of equality through an emotive and descriptive discourse. It is not until the second page of the foreword that public service reform is itself mentioned, “We are also reforming our public services”. This narrative sets a clearer single discourse for reform

than *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*' 'four pillars', where 'addressing inequality' was less dominantly present as a subset of the 'Prevention' pillar. However, *Open Public Services*' echoing with this concern over the promotion of equality destabilises the assertion that Scotland is different from the rest of the UK in the purported more welfarist and public service orientated approach. Indeed, in relation to public service reform, these two public documents indicate a far stronger narrative of equality in the UK Government discourse (where it is the dominant narrative) than the Scottish Government (where it is one of a number of sub-narratives).

Open Public Services' call for equality is not only different to *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* in terms of strength and dominance of egalitarian narrative, but also in terms of tone. *Open Public Services* has an intense explicit moralistic style, that is absent from the Scottish Government's consideration of equality. This is illustrated in the following two excerpts.

There is an overwhelming imperative – an urgent moral purpose – which drives our desire to reform public services (Cabinet Office, 2011: 4).

Over the course of this Parliament Scotland's public services will make a decisive shift towards prevention and take a holistic approach to addressing inequalities (Scottish Government, 2007: 9).

These excerpts can be contrasted from different perspectives and there are a number of potentially valid readings and interpretations that may be made. On the one hand, *Open Public Services* provides an explicit appeal to moral urgency, without any explanation of what this urgent moral purpose is. Arguably, this moral urgency could be further advancements in the privatisation agenda or other neo-liberal reforms. The *Renewing Public Services* text can be seen as concerned with more specific 'prevention' and 'inequalities' by adopting a holistic approach. In this reading of the excerpts, *Open Public Services* has a shallower, emptier, yet flashier discourse, which is contrasted with the sensible and considered approach in *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*.

On the other hand, these excerpts can be read as demonstrating how *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* is comparably a drier read, colder and more factually and process driven. This contrasts with the heat and speed of *Open Public Services*, which conveys more passion and vigour, using colourful metaphors ("Every pair of idle hands", p4) and consistent references to 'us' to draw the reader into the narratives presented. Combined with the coherence of a clear dominant single narrative, this works to improve *Open Public Services'* engagement with the reader, communicating a clarity of vision, and, it may be assumed, attempting to sell a stronger case for public service reform. Chapter Two outlined how a number of theorists (Gabriel, 2004; Sims, 2004; Gheradi, 2004) have stressed the importance of passion in myth-making and that this is necessary for any successful narrative to emotionally engage with its audience. Comparing these two documents suggests that this

understanding that emotionality will improve the 'success' of a narrative was at least partially present in the narrative creation of *Open Public Services*.

This analytical finding of an attempted emotive framing of equality as a discursive device in *Open Public Services*, contrasts with the weight of literature that critiques the current UK administration for making existing inequalities worse (for example MacLeavy, 2011). Indeed, the UK Government announced some time ago that it will no longer undertake dedicated Equality Impact Assessments of policies (BBC, 2012). This itself highlights the potentially significant gap between a document's rhetorical narrative approach and the actions that a government takes. Whilst discourse is part of everyday life, discourse analysis cannot on its own identify all that occurs in everyday life. In this context, a discourse analysis can reveal a professed rhetoric of equality in *Open Public Services* (albeit perhaps only partially convincing) but this does not necessarily indicate that the UK Government are taking any action to address inequality. It is these contrasts between rhetoric and action, that can form space for the construction of sites to contest power structures and where actors can demand change to honour the rhetorics utilised by government. In this thesis, the 'success' (or otherwise) of the narrative of equality will be partially tested by the examination of the case-study data in the following chapters.

4.3.5 The Denigration of Public Sector Workers

It can be noted that narratives of *citizen* equality are different to narratives in support of public services and their workers. It has been argued by Clarke et al. (2007) that UK public service reform has increasingly imagined those using public services within a construct of 'citizen-consumer' in neo-liberal managerialism. In their analyses, the citizen-consumer demands and consumes public services in a similar manner to the consumption of private goods and services, and the public sector must respond to the citizen as a customer who desires choice and excellence. There is an implied contrast between treating the citizen as a consumer/customer, and treating them as a subject of public services. Neo-liberal governments imagine that traditional public services are driven by self-interest by the workers, treating the citizen as secondary to the service itself. Meanwhile, modern public services are framed as operating under private sector principles where the citizen and their wishes are of paramount importance and the workers must be suppressed from running services in a manner convenient to themselves.

This neo-liberal imagining of traditional public services is evident in *Open Public Services*, and in clear contrast to the narrative used by the Scottish Government in *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*:

So reform of public services is a key progressive cause. The better our public services, the more we are helping those most in need.

That is why those who resist reform, put the producer interest before the citizens' needs, and object to publishing information about how services perform are conspiring to keep our society less free, less fair and less united.

Throughout this paper, we will explain just how our reforms give power to those who have been overlooked and underserved. We will also demonstrate that it is only by publishing data on how public services do their jobs that we can wrest power out of the hands of highly paid officials and give it back to the people. And our reforms will mean that the poorest will be at the front of the queue (Cabinet Office, 2007: 5).

This section establishes a clear alternative narrative to that employed by the Scottish Government. Whilst the Scottish Government built a whole 'pillar' of reform on the 'people' of the public sector, albeit with limited considerations of workers as such, the UK Government has no similar narrative of any kind. The Scottish Government stressed the importance of valuing and supporting public sector staff, but the UK Government constructs these workers as 'other' by denigrating them as 'highly paid officials' from whom they need to 'wrest power'. The Scottish Government narrative indicated a desire to include staff in public sector reform, by telling a story that would be attractive and flattering to them. Such a story may be attempting to dampen staff resentment and opposition to reform that has led to industrial action and disruption of services (BBC, 2014).

By taking a very different narrative approach the UK Government is making no similar attempt to include staff as the heroes of the stories and by explicitly depicting them as villains, the UK Government is clarifying that public sector workers are not a priority audience for attraction and engagement. Indeed, the UK narrative is content to sacrifice this audience and the text implies public sector staff are deliberately blocking reform to protect their own interests: "That is why those who resist reform, put the producer interest before the citizens' needs, and object to publishing information about how services perform are conspiring to keep our society less free, less fair and less united."

In this manner the UK Government is constructing a distinct narrative based on the citizen hero as theorised by Llewellyn (2001) and discussed in Chapter Two. Llewellyn argues that the creation of a narrative whereby the service user must fight the evil public service provider, is widely employed as a justification for privatisation and reform. This is supported by the binary opposition understanding of public sector staff as villainous and obstructive characters who must be defeated to achieve a fairy-tale ending. These binary oppositions assist the UK Government to achieve legitimacy for their ideological neo-conservative aims. The power base is strengthened by an understanding of the public citizen-consumer's primacy: any challenge to the denigration of public sector worker can be attributed to selfishness and deliberate wickedness. As a discursive device, attributing the role of villain to public sector workers, helps to achieve government legitimacy by holding this group at arms-length from the citizen hero and the government who supports this citizen hero. This construction of public sector workers as villainous 'others' also works to

silence dissent as nonsensical and counterproductive by implying that any challenge to their denigration is self-serving.

4.3.6 Public Sector Transparency as a Driver for Reform

The UK Government's use of appeals to the key concept of openness and transparency is also a narrative not dominant in *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*. 'Openness and transparency' is a sub-section of the 'Improving Performance' pillar of *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*, but bears little weight in the overall document or foreword. The UK Government however present open communications as the key to unlock improved services, "...it is only by publishing data on how public services do their jobs that we can wrest power out of the hands of highly paid officials and give it back to the people." This narrative suggests that somehow it is communications and open access to information that will itself drive public service reform for the better, again constructing an implied narrative that villainous workers are concealing failure and poor performance. In turn, this then provides an argument for privatisation and greater open competition in the provision of public services.

This narrative of openness has a clear link to that of the denigration of public sector workers and Llewellyn's framework (2001) can again be used in this analysis. The two narratives of openness and the denigration of public sector workers, complement and reinforce each other by establishing a discursive relationship that constructs an understanding that each narrative must lead to the other: villainous civil servants will surely suppress information to suit themselves; lack of transparency in the public

sector will lead to civil servants becoming self-serving. This dichotomous relationship reinforces the strength of both narratives whilst also fortifying the meta-narrative of change and reform. In turn, this works to construct further legitimacy for the government. In this story, the Government is the hero who is able to slay evil civil servants and their cursed opaqueness. In Chapter Two it was outlined how Llewellyn (2001) identified the most common modernisation story as being one of the imagery of the lost citizen, the citizen's quest and the final triumph. In this narrative the customer is locked in battle with the unresponsive public service provider, achieving the service they deserve through modernisation, and potentially, privatisation. Applying Llewellyn's framework to *Open Public Services* reveals a narrative where the UK Government undertakes this heroic role to free the lost citizen.

4.3.7 Globalisation

The final main narrative present in the *Open Public Services* discourse is that of globalisation. The notion of 'globalisation' as an imperative for change is widely contested (Sykes et al., 2001) but has a strong hold in the public consciousness, with its regular use by politicians as a structuring device to explain perceived threats to stability or as a justification for fiscal austerity (Guardian, 2011; HM Treasury, 2010).

Globalisation as a narrative driver of reform fits within Store's (1989, cited in Fisher, 2003) typology. Chapter Two outlined Store's typology of the primary types of policy narratives as decline/crisis and human helplessness/need for control, as providing the perceived imperative for policy change.

The imperative of globalisation is identified as a further driver of public service reform in *Open Public Services*, both constraining action, whilst also providing opportunities:

For in a world rendered so much more competitive by globalisation, we can no longer afford to leave talents neglected (Cabinet Office, 2011: 4).

However, globalisation is entirely absent as a theme in *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*. This means that whilst the budgetary impetus for UK reform is driven by the indistinct spectre of 'globalisation', for the Scottish Government the source of financial constraint is identified as lying squarely with 'Westminster'. In this way, whilst both sets of narrative use finance and affordability as an imperative for public service reform, they find different roots or villains to blame for the changes.

Reform can be driven for a number of reasons, including to deliver improvements or to compensate for failure or loss. If both of these conditions are met then the impetus for reform is stronger. The narrative of globalisation acts as a threat or a bogeyman in the story of reform: change must happen to protect against this threat. In the case of a global financial crisis, reform becomes essential to react to this uncontrollable force.

Financial austerity is used in both *Open Public Services* and *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* as a threatening bogeyman that can be defeated through reform. In both cases, the respective government's use financial austerity as a discursive device to strengthen their legitimacy and

power base. The Scottish Government does this by depicting themselves as victim of the unfair UK oppressor, whilst the UK Government does this by constructing a more heroic narrative of itself dealing with the crisis of global financial austerity.

Looking in detail at the narratives of globalisation and financial austerity presented by these governments, there is a clear match with Store's typologies of decline/crisis and human helplessness/need for control, indicating in these examples at least, that these typologies hold true.

4.3.8 Summary of *Open Public Services* Analysis

Analysis of *Open Public Services* has provided a range of findings to address questions around identifying a discernible Scottish ideology, SNP divergence and story plots. By examining *Open Public Services* the following divergences in the narratives of the Scottish Government's *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* have been identified:

TABLE 4.1: Key Narratives in *Open Public Services* and *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*

Key <i>Open Public Services</i> Narratives	Key <i>Renewing Scotland's Public Services</i> Narratives
Absence of explicit references to nation state, combined with implicit and symbolic references to nation-state.	Consistent calls to Scottish nationality and the virtues of a Scottish nation state.
Appeals to authority and power assertion.	Appeals to competence and authority.
Globalisation as threat and a driver for reform and austerity.	Desire to protect Scotland from the UK Government as the driver of reform and austerity.
<i>No comparable narrative.</i>	Support for the delivery of place-based services.
Denigration of public sector staff.	Valuing of public sector staff.
Rhetoric of equality.	<i>No comparable narrative in terms of strength. Equality a sub-set of the 1st pillar of reform (prevention).</i>
Calls for greater transparency in the public sector.	<i>No comparable narrative in terms of strength. Transparency a sub-set of the 4th pillar of reform (performance).</i>
<i>No comparable narrative.</i>	More generic support for reforms that will improve performance.

In terms of addressing the subsidiary research question about Scottish ideological divergence from UK narratives of public service reform, Table 4.1 indicates a clear divergence from UK narratives. This divergence is both in substantive content, for example the valuing of public sector staff, and the prioritisation of the ideological feature in terms of the overall narrative, for example, with regards to equality. Indeed the only convergence in ideological features is with regard to governmental claims to authority. In addressing the subsidiary research question, 'Have the SNP administrations since 2007 managed to break away from UK Labour and Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition political constructs of reform?', this indicates a clear break by the SNP administration from the UK constructs of reform.

The analysis showed perhaps less differentiation when addressing the other subsidiary research question about difference in Scottish and UK story plots. Whilst ideological differences and constructs were identified, there were some apparent similarities in the stories told and their plots. Most notably, both governments constructed a threatening bogeyman that was causing financial austerity: for the UK Government this was globalisation; for the Scottish Government this was the UK Government. This finding appears to re-affirm the theories expressed in Chapter Two and earlier in this chapter that there are a limited number of core stories and typologies that are used to explain and justify organisational change (Store, 1989 (cited in Fischer, 2003); Llewellyn, 2001).

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out to address the question 'How is public service reform discursively framed in Scotland and what are its underlying themes?' and also the related questions: Have the SNP administrations since 2007 managed to break away from UK Labour and Conservative/ Liberal Democrat political constructs of reform?; and What are the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland and how do they diverge from UK narratives of public service reform? Chapter One detailed the limitations of existing literature in this area, that whilst there is a significant body of literature considering public sector reform (Hood, 1991; Newman 2000, 2001; Clarke, 1998, 2004a) and a more limited attempt to consider this in the context of devolution (McTavish 2003; Riddell, 2003) there is a general lack of understanding of the role of discourse or ideology. The dominant political science perspective in Scotland (Parry, 2002; Keating, 2005) shows little interest in rhetorical or textual analysis.

The detailed discourse analysis undertaken on the two policy documents appears to at least partially support notions of the 'New Scotland' (Hassan and Warhurst, 2002; Paterson et al, 2004; Bechofer and McCrone, 2004) by finding discursive evidence that the Scottish Government employs a rhetorical difference from the UK Government in the aims of public service reform. This theme is explored further in the following chapter, which focuses on a narrative analysis of two key published texts from the case study organisations. This analysis will search for evidence of translation of

the meta-narratives present in the government policy documents, into the organisation's documents. Chapter Five will challenge and destabilise the findings of difference in this chapter, suggesting that the meta-rhetoric of government can be difficult to find within the discourse of reform in public sector organisations.

CHAPTER 5

PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM IN SCOTLAND AND THE UK: IDENTIFYING META-NARRATIVES IN ORGANISATIONAL PUBLIC DISCOURSE

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the narrative framing of public service reform in the public domain by the two case study organisations. The analyses reveal a complex set of findings, whereby the early findings of Scottish/ UK Government difference are challenged by examinations of policies drawn from their respective public sector bodies.

Chapter One of the thesis discussed evidence of a distinctive Scottish discourse, such as around constructions of a 'New' Scotland. This chapter problematises the earlier assumptions that there *are* differences in how public service reform is discursively framed in Scotland and the UK, challenging the foundation of difference, and suggesting that there is both some degree of similarity in how reform is understood and translated in the case study organisations, and a misalignment in assumptions about Scottish difference.

The chapter examines key texts from the two case study organisations themselves which are the main focus of this thesis: Scottish Enterprise and CICA. The two case study sites analyses provide an indication of how individual staff in these organisations interpreted the dominant meta-

narratives to which they were subject, and translated them into meso-narratives that were of greater relevance at an operational level.

This concern with meta-narratives and their translation directly addresses the main research question about the discursive framing public service reform in Scotland and also the related subsidiary research questions about Scottish ideology and story plots.

The key literatures that the chapter's findings will engage with are those that variously outline, evidence and refute notions of the 'New Scotland'. Chapter One provided a detailed analysis of theorists who have found substantive difference in the Scottish policy environment (Paterson et al., 2004; Stewart 2004a; Poole and Mooney, 2006), leading to claims of the creation of a 'New Scotland' (Hassan and Warhurst, 2002; Bechofer and McCrone, 2004). However, the notion of a 'New Scotland' has been problematised (Mooney and Scott, 2005) with some literatures identifying powerful *converging* trends in Scottish policy-making (Watson and West, 2008; Law and Mooney, 2012). Chapter Four's initial finding of Scottish distinctiveness is problematised when examining texts of individual agencies, which identifies diversity in what could be understood as Scottish narratives. This chapter will argue that actors and agencies appear to be operating in isolation to each other, with minimal attempts to present a coherent narrative across government.

5.2 Operationalising Government Themes of Reform by Case Study Organisations

Whilst the central government documents analysed provide findings about how government Ministers and central bureaucracy imagine and justify reform, it is necessary to move down to the meso-level of individual organisations to examine how these meta-narratives have been operationalised in practice. The use of these case study documents will assist in addressing the subsidiary research question about whether or not there is a distinct Scottish ideology evident in policy formation.

The following section explores a key text from each of the case study organisations. These are *The Way Ahead* (CICA, 2008) and *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan 2012-15* (Scottish Enterprise, 2011). In these texts the meta-narratives present in the central government documents have been translated and reinterpreted by the documents' authors, but more commonly, completely ignored. This section also includes a brief analysis of the text from the Scottish Government's internal reform programme *Shaping-up*¹.

5.3 *The Way Ahead*: A Personalised Approach

CICA's *The Way Ahead* has a very specific style that contrasts significantly with the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan*. *The Way Ahead*

¹ The UK Ministry of Justice (main sponsors of CICA), have a similar internal reform programme, but permission to use content from this programme was not granted.

employs a distinct discursive strategy of the personalisation of the senior management team. Fairclough (2001) terms this attempt to personalise text for wide consumption 'synthetic personalisation', highlighting the artificiality of using language to try and create a false familiarity between the author/ producer and audience/ consumer. Talbot and Atkinson (2003) identify this synthetic personalisation at work as a way of presenting an informal and friendly tone that disguises unequal power relations by giving an illusion of amiable equality.

Almost every part of *The Way Ahead* is ostensibly presented in the voice of the Chief Executive or a Senior Director. The Corporate Services Director states on page 8 that "we want to project the right image", a desire that is evidenced by the personal approach and use of photographs. This begins on page 3 with the "Chief Executive's Introduction", including a smiling photograph. In the first sentence she tells the audience about "my career", providing a reassurance as to her competence and stressing her personal skills – which the author/s assume to be a more appropriate start than talking about the organisation or reform. She outlines her "personal responsibility" immediately and it is half way through the page before the first person singular ('I' and 'my') moves into the first person plural ('we' and 'our'). Individual directors continue the first person plural, suggesting that a first person singular is only appropriate for the Chief Executive.

Large photographs of the senior management team are common throughout the document, for example a third of page 4 is taken up with a photograph and name check of them. Headings use familiar and informal

language: for example the heading 'Why we're changing' uses an informal abbreviation of 'we are' to bring the document closer to the reader.

The 'synthetic personalisation' (Fairclough, 2001) used throughout this document creates a tonal impression that the senior management team are close to the reader and wish to include them in a conversation. This is effective in both drawing the audience in to the narrative and suppressing challenge to the dominant narrative. The construction of a friendly tone makes disagreement more uncomfortable and less likely. In Talbot and Atkinson's (2003) terms it also helps to detract from the power held by the managers to both determine the story re-told and control the subsequent action. This personalised framing therefore is an important discursive device for the stories told in *The Way Ahead*.

5.4 The Way Ahead: Managerialism and Managers as a Solution to Problems with 'Staff' and 'Systems'

The Chief Executive sets out the parameters of a story that the rest of the document will follow:

...improving the CICA's service...I already knew that the National Audit Office were about to publish a highly critical report on the Authority but I also knew that we had the backing of our sponsor department and some very committed staff who were ready to embrace the change necessary. There were already major changes being tested...However, working with the newly established management board, we identified other processes which could make

a difference to the way we work. By January 2008 the CICA board had a significant amount of information on which to base its forward strategy...we announced to our staff the model we believe will deliver real change for our organisation, and real improvement in the services...these changes will make dealing with CICA easier and provide a better service (CICA, 2008: 3).

This dominant story can be summarised as follows. CICA was a failing organisation, but it was not the staff's fault. The staff wanted change. 'We' (the management) are making this change happen and we will make the organisation better. We are already seeing some of the benefits of change and will see even more in the future. This story provides the title of the document 'the way ahead' – a partially-veiled critique of what has gone before. Page 4 of the document begins by explaining that:

Our performance has not been at the level we would like to see in recent years. (CICA, 2008: 4).

This is an interesting turn of phrase, since this particular management team were not employed by CICA "in recent years", so it is not really "our" performance at all. This sentence employs a standard civil service convention of staff taking responsibility for the actions of their predecessors, but in this instance it also allows the current management team to indirectly criticise their predecessors, whilst the use of the ambiguous 'our' also collectivises blame and suggests that failure may lie more widely than simply within management. The paragraph continues:

Although our staff were performing well in that time, the system in which they were working was no longer up to the job. (CICA, 2008: 4).

This employs a discursive device of establishing a binary of possible responsibilities for ineffectiveness: staff or 'the system'. By displacing blame to 'the system' the management team can more readily expect cooperation by the staff whose support will be required to implement change. 'The system' is an ambiguous term that can have a variety of meanings for different readers - the government, management, bureaucracy, IT, working processes and various other definitions. The use of deliberately vague terms means that the discourse can more readily adapt and provide meaning to a diverse audience.

A narrative of good staff versus bad system continues the story established in the document's introduction, but leads to unexplained tensions in the story. How do the management team know that the staff were performing well and the problem was with the system, when they were not there? And what about the previous management team? Were they not "staff performing well" too, or were only some, more junior, staff performing well? Was the 'system' not created and sustained by the staff? The story encounters a sub-narrative in the next paragraph, stating:

An interim team of Directors was appointed...as a response to the performance difficulties that had been identified. (CICA, 2008: 4).

This directly contradicts the story that there was no problem with staff performance, whilst providing a new discursive strategy to establish the need for change. The resulting confusion as to whether staff failure is a need for reform, sets the document at arms-length to the clearer criticism of staff identified in *Open Public Services*.

The confusion presented by *The Way Ahead* is not confined to the UK Government or public narratives. The Scottish Government's wider internal staff web publication about government reform, *Shaping-up*, also showed a tension between voices expressed. For example, the second paragraph of the article ends with a quiet caveat:

...your suggestions...will be implemented *where practicable*
[emphasis added]. (Scottish Government, 2010: unnumbered).

The sudden use of the legalistic term of 'practicable' provides a clear reminder that this is not a straightforward and linear change programme. There are competing voices fighting over reform, certain discourses and agendas will prevail, and these will be the voices that come to define what is 'practicable'. Similarly, the sixth paragraph refers to engagement with the Council of Scottish Government Unions. This paragraph is silent on the enormous dissent over the *Shaping Up* programme that has been expressed by the Trade Unions, in particular by PCS, the Trade Union for most civil servants and those of a lower grade (PCS, 2010).

The presentation of managers and managerialism as solutions to 'staff' and 'systems', and the resulting confusion reflects the broader

consideration of managers and managerialism in the literature. Hood's (1991) ideal type of New Public Management remains a highly contested concept (Duggett, 2007; Pollitt, 2007) and a number of theorists have highlighted tension and diversity in managerialism and its facets (Clarke, 2004b; Painter, 2006). However, confusion and narrative tension, complexity and contradiction play an important discursive role. Leitch and Davenport (2007) identify that 'strategic ambiguity' can be a functional discursive practice that:

- Provides superficial coherence to text.
- Allows multiple perspectives to co-exist.
- Facilitates the engagement of actors with incompatible ideologies.

Strategic ambiguity in *The Way Ahead*, and to a lesser extent *Shaping-up*, allows differing viewpoints and voices to co-exist. This provides a way of permitting a wider audience of perspectives to find some engagement with at least part of the text and reduces complete alienation from the narrative. AS a discursive device, this encourages more staff to identify and absorb key messages, whilst at the same time bolstering managerial claims to authority through validating the story they are telling.

5.5 *The Way Ahead*: A Story of Heroes and Villains

CICA's personalised approach constructs managers as saving the failing organisation, suggesting parallels with the recurrent myths of the hero in organisational literature (Campbell-Evans, 1993; Gabriel, 1995; Hofstede, 1997; Cunliffe, 2012). The following section explains how this common narrative device of hero was complemented with the identification of a sub-textual discursive device of villain in *The Way Ahead*. The use of

heroes and villains as a dichotomous discursive device may be considered a natural progression to the use of heroes in existing literature and theory. The language and concepts of heroes and villains construct particular narrative frames to constrain understanding into a simplistic 'for' or 'against' depiction of a complex social situation.

The Foucauldian approach underpinning this thesis positions discourse as both constraining and enabling understanding (McHoul and Grace, 1995). The use of heroes and villains to form a site to provide meaning to a context, assists the subjects and discourse to create positive notions of change by constructing those 'for' the change as heroes and those 'against' as villains. This discursive device disrupts attention from the change itself and what this entails or means, and instead directs focus to more limited stories of individuals and their role. In this way, public service reform itself can avoid being directly contested or openly discussed in the narrative, and as a discursive device, the heroes and villains dichotomy can be used to fundamentally destabilise and deflect potential challenges to the progress of reform.

In this first quote, the story-teller is depicted as hero:

From having personal responsibility for front line service delivery to setting performance standards for others, delivering an excellent standard of service has been the underlying theme of my career. So improving the CICA's service, both for victims of violent crime and our key stakeholders, was my top priority when I became the organisation's Chief Executive in September last year...What follows

is a summary of the changes being rolled out across our organisation over the course of this year. We think these changes will make dealing with CICA easier and provide a better service to innocent victims of violent crime. (CICA, 2008: 2).

The preceding quote, attributed to the Chief Executive in her foreword to *The Way Ahead*, shows an apparent desire to impress upon the audience that the story-teller has personally brought significant positive reform into the organisation, with the implied indication that organisational success can be attributed to the subject. This aligns with CICA's narrative of reform being about the organisation's improvement, rather than driven by financial pressure. Baker (2006) understands this type of construction as a deliberate 'repositioning of participants'. This is the work undertaken by the storyteller to position themselves and others in the narrative to understand their own and others' roles. In these case studies, the positioning or repositioning of the storyteller as hero, constructs a narrative that supports the dominant power structure. The senior leader can lay claim to their authority by reference to this hero narrative where they are responsible for organisational success, and by so doing, the narrative both suppresses alternative understandings of the organisation and consolidates the subject's personal power. However the CICA text also identified villains in the narrative, albeit in a sub-textual way. There is a difference between highlighting different aspects of the change to fit with a personal narrative, and a conscious reinterpretation or re-writing of discourse that is evidenced in interpersonal contradictions and points to traces of a re-writing of history:

I already knew that the National Audit Office were about to publish a highly critical report on the Authority but also knew that we had the backing of our sponsor department and some very committed staff who were ready to embrace the change necessary (CICA, 2008: 2).

It is important to note that even apparently clear and mono-directional narratives will contain traces of competing discourses. In the example above, on closer examination of the text it is revealed that there were “*some* [emphasis added] very committed staff who were ready to embrace the change necessary”, hinting that not *all* staff were embracing this change. These types of leaks between stories may be common to narratives in many situations. In terms of public sector reform, these types of 'ghost' narratives can not only signal differences within the organisation, but may also indicate conflict and competing feelings within the story-teller. In this example the author/s may be predominantly driven by a desire to tell a meta-narrative of staff supporting reform, and yet cannot help but simultaneously hint that there is another story to tell. Taking this one step further to reflect on the organisation itself, as a UK body within the dominant hegemony, CICA's own meta-narrative reflects this dominant position. The marginalised narrative leaking into this meta-narrative, is that of the dissenting Scottish Government staff who are seconded to CICA, yet retaining loyalties to the Scottish administration.

This sub-textual or ghost narrative within CICA's *The Way Ahead* has an interesting relationship with the UK Government's *Open Public Services*. As discussed earlier, *Open Public Services* used an explicit narrative of

villainous workers standing in the way of reform. The translation and 'demotion' of this meta-narrative into a sub-textual narrative by the CICA document allows CICA to *partly* align with the meta-narrative whilst overtly supporting their staff. This translation at the organisational and operational level is important because the CICA management team must keep their own staff engaged with the reform process and 'on-side'. An explicit criticism and blaming of CICA staff for organisational failure will alienate the people that CICA needs to make the reform successful. In this way, governmental narratives at meta and meso levels may never be fully aligned: the meta-level must hail a broad audience and identify villains to blame for failure; the meso-level engages a narrower audience of public sector workers who cannot be personally humiliated by the story told. Both the meta and meso story-tellers must be credible to their differing audiences, but this is achieved through different and related narratives. Contradictions in these narrative practices may be partially revealed to workers and their unions with the potential to confuse and inflame tension.

The Way Ahead uses 'strategic ambiguity' (Leitch and Davenport, 2007) to engage a broad range of audiences in its deployment of narratives with heroes and villains. Taken together with *Open Public Services*, this is a narrative in flux, where the actors who play the heroes and villains' roles are changing and sometimes ambiguous. However, the use of the familiar story-line (Gabriel, 1995) provides a more easily digestible account of change that accords with audience expectations of a story's plot.

5.6 Absences in CICA document *The Way Ahead*

Absence of clarity in what is being discussed is a significant feature of *The Way Ahead*. Whilst references to the wider policy environment are rare, some discussions are entirely absent. *All* the key narratives identified from *Open Public Services* (globalisation; openness; denigration of public sector workers; equality; appeals to authority; sub-textual references to nationhood) are absent from *The Way Ahead*. Furthermore, the document does not mention what the CICA is or what it does: it assumes that this is already fully understood by the reader. The CICA aims and objectives (page 2) provide no indication of the function of the organisation or the service they provide. This implies an assumption that the organisation does not need to explain itself and in this sense replicates the sub-narrative of arrogance identified in *Open Public Services*' assumption that it did not need to explain key contextual factors with regard to nation or parliament.

As previously discussed, discourse analysis theory indicates that more than language can be examined for traces of power at work. Rather than focusing purely on a linguistic analysis, the whole artefact of a document should be considered (Clarke, Lewis and Gewirtz, 2000a). In this case a 'new' logo is in use on the cover that contrasts with the old 'puddle' logo². It is more modern, has removed the 'tears' and includes the phrase "a government funded service - putting victims first", yet still has no indication of purpose. The assumption that that it is automatically known what is

² There are no longer any examples of the 'old' logo in the public domain

being discussed continues at page 7, which says that the Director of Operations is responsible for 'specialist casework', without any indication of what this means.

Most importantly, the changes are presented as logical progressions of 'good management'. However, the document does not explain that most of the changes outlined are targeted responses to specific recommendations of the Public Accounts Select Committee or National Audit Office, and not based on the views or personal approaches of the managers implementing them. This appears to create a subject position of the author/s as hero/es by constructing a narrative where the personalities of the senior management team have independently created a story of success and improvement, rather than more humbly having it imposed upon them.

The continued lack of recognition of the political, parliamentary and public sector context of CICA reform in this published document, provides further evidence that CICA leaders are not fully and consciously aware of the hegemonic structure within which they are operating. This may be due to their own dominant position and lack of necessity or experience in struggling for power or a voice.

The consideration of absence is a fundamental part of discourse analysis because what is absent is marginalised, whilst what is present is privileged (Mumby and Stohl, 1991). In *The Way Ahead*, CICA uses absence to marginalise:

- The rhetorical reform priorities of the UK Government.
- An explanation of CICA's function.

- The contextual location of CICA's specific reforms as targeted responses to specific political and parliamentary recommendations.

These absences ultimately privilege the heroic narrative role of senior managers, without needing to provide an explanation of function or situate these changes within wider UK reform. The absence of traces of UK Government priorities suggests that these may be rhetorical priorities only: organisations can and will reform in isolation to concerns about equality or transparency. In particular, differences in narrative may be influenced by the differences in UK Government at the time of document publication. Most importantly, CICA's reforms are publically presented as driven by Public Accounts Select Committee and National Audit Office recommendations, revealing a more ambiguous and complex governance landscape than may be assumed.

5.7 Summary of *The Way Ahead* Analysis

Analysis of *The Way Ahead* has gathered information to assist in addressing the subsidiary research question about the existence of a Scottish ideology by providing case-study data on UK narratives of public service reform at a meso-level. The analysis has revealed a very significant variation from UK meta-narratives of reform as identified in *Open Public Services*. CICA's narrative difference reflects specific demands for change and constructs a role of hero for the manager-leaders, which assists in the maintenance of their legitimacy and authority. The main themes identified in CICA's narratives of reform were:

- A personalised approach.

- The presentation of managerialism and managers as a solution to problems with 'staff' and 'systems'.
- A story of heroes and villains.
- Key unexplained absences in the text.

The following section examines the Scottish Enterprise Business Plan in order to ascertain the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland at a case study meso-level, and will go onto then reflect in what way this diverges from UK narratives of reform at the meso and macro levels.

5.8 *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan*: Tonal Opaqueness

The Way Ahead is in sharp contrast to the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan* in respect to its personalised voice. Whilst the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan* does include named Chairman's and Chief Executive's introductions, it quickly becomes a factual and dry read, comprised of lists of achievements and targets, and extensive explanations of how the Scottish economy can be assisted. From this perspective, these organisation's documents are mimicking the patterns of their respective government's meta-narrative tone. The UK CICA takes a personal and more engaging approach, while Scottish Enterprise retains a neutral, explanatory approach. The choice for the UK documents to adopt a more coherent narrative approach brings the reader closer to the story-tellers, compared with the factual basis of the Scottish Enterprise document. This may be due in part to Scottish Enterprise's role as an economic development agency and an embedded tendency to discuss matters in a

more factual tone, void of emotion. CICA on the other hand is routinely dealing with sensitive issues connected to the victims of violent crime and throughout the agency will frequently be communicating with distressed and emotional individuals. In this way, the differing narrative approaches employed in the documents may reflect the culture that has developed within the agencies as part of their day-to-day work.

In terms of the research question about a Scottish ideology, there is a clear divergence between the UK personalised narrative of reform and the more formal, depersonalised narratives of the Scottish Government. It was earlier considered that 'synthetic personalisation' (Fairclough, 2001) could act as a discursive device to obfuscate power differentials (Talbot and Atkinson, 2003). The meta and meso analysis of the UK and Scottish Government documents have indicated that the UK Government and its agency has utilised synthetic personalisation in a manner that the Scottish government and its agency has not. Applying Talbot and Atkinson's hypothesis, this would suggest that compared to the Scottish Government, the UK Government may have more significant power differentials within government and/or more important reasons to hide these differentials. It would be convenient to attribute this difference to the UK Government's hegemonic status within the devolution settlement, but it is important to remember that the two UK documents were not written and published specifically within the context of the devolution settlement: issues of devolution and the Scottish Government are tangential to the documents' foci.

Rather than attribute this difference to a reasoning from the perspective of the UK Government, it is asserted that the Scottish Government's depersonalised approach may itself be a result of the uneven devolution settlement which results in a subordinate positioning of the Scottish Government relative to the UK Government. The Scottish Government's position as a subordinate power in the UK Governmental hegemony is likely to make the Scottish Government more conscious of their relative position and less likely to take measures to try and obscure issues of power and control.

5.9 *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan*: Absence of the Four Pillars of Reform

However, although there is a similarity of tone, when comparing narrative content, the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan* has a limited relationship to the Scottish Government's 'four pillars' of reform. Despite Scottish Enterprise being a fully funded NDPB of the Scottish Government, traces of the consideration of public sector workers, place-based service provision and prevention (whether interpreted broadly or as a defence against the UK Government) could not be identified, although the document did broadly align with the Scottish Government's aim of improving performance in its focus. The earlier analysis of *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* also revealed narratives of calls to Scottish nationality and appeals to competence and authority. These narratives were not explicitly present, but the content was clearly located in Scotland (for example by referencing the geographic location of companies) and the general tone of the document was one of a professed clarity of purpose

and action. It can be therefore concluded that these two Scottish Government narratives were sub-narratives in the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan*.

It is significant that three of the Scottish Government's central four pillars of reform appeared largely absent from the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan*, one was only sub-textually present and a further two narratives were also only present through traces of sub-narrative. The narratives that were shared were fairly generic (improving performance; Scottishness; presentation of self as competent) and it can be asserted that these could reasonably be shared by chance by any two organisations. In a similar manner to the UK Government and CICA, it would appear that the government agency does not take its narrative lead from the centre and bases its plan on locally situated issues.

This also an indication of locally-sited power being key to how public agencies operate, with no strong leadership or central coercion that is demanding that the agencies align with central government. In Foucauldian terms, this is an indication of the ability for local actors and agencies to contest and forge their own identities, rather than being simply subjects of the existing hegemony.

5.10 *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan*: A Story of Financial Constraints as an Imperative for Change

One particularly surprising finding was Scottish Enterprise's explicit alignment with one of the *UK* narratives of reform. Scottish Enterprise's

business plan tells an uneven story that suggests that at least part of the reasons for reform are driven by a tightening financial climate. In this respect, they have absorbed a meta-narrative of the financial impetus for change and are re-telling a version of the same story. However, the meta-narrative that they have absorbed is that of the *UK*, not Scottish Government. Scottish Enterprise located their financial constraints as clearly within a globalisation narrative, whilst for CICA financial change was purely about improving processes and governance – something specific to the organisation and not rooted in wider developments.

...report after report highlight the increasingly fragile state of the global economy. Scotland like most other Western economies, has not been immune. (Scottish Enterprise, 2011: 1).

The key objective, therefore is to set-up and structure each function, embed them into our business and ensure adequate controls are in place throughout the organisation. Our new structure will help ensure we are governed effectively. (CICA, 2008: 4).

Whilst it is important to be aware that the timing of the global financial crisis may have influenced the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan*, this example problematises any preconception about there being a clear relationship between meta and meso narratives in organisations. Scottish Enterprise has ignored the Scottish Government's own analysis of the reasons for financial restraint (the UK Government) and instead translated the UK Government's story of financial change (globalisation) into their own narrative. CICA, on the other hand, has similarly ignored the UK

Government's meta-narrative of globalisation as a driver for reform, and located the organisation's reform in its own self-improvement.

It is not clear from a simple analysis of these documents whether this misalignment is deliberate, due to misunderstanding, or a failure of the Scottish Government's meta-narrative to saturate organisational consciousness. This finding may be linked to the fundamental differences in the organisations and their functions. CICA is providing an individual service to victims of crime in the UK; whilst Scottish Enterprise is seeking to support economic growth through business. Hence Scottish Enterprise is likely to be more sensitive to, and more readily hail, considerations of international economic change. This will be examined further with reference to the interview data in the following chapter.

It can be asserted that is likely that the UK Government's hegemonic position has given it greater ability to saturate Scottish organisations with its own meta-narrative. However, this theory is then inadequate to explain why CICA have not also absorbed and translated this narrative. It is therefore concluded that at the meso-level, organisational actors will utilise narratives to suit their local circumstances at any one time, with a negligible concern for how this may align with meta-narratives.

5.11 Summary of the Analysis of the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan*

Analysis of the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan* has presented data findings to assist in addressing the subsidiary research question ‘What are the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland and how do they diverge from UK narratives of public service reform?’, by providing case-study data on Scottish narratives of public service reform at a meso-level. The analysis has further complicated an increasingly diverse picture of the relationship between narratives of reform at the macro and meso levels. There is a formal tonal similarity between the Scottish documents, but the ideological features of reform in Scottish Enterprise indicate a limited relationship to Scottish Government narratives of reform, and instead share a key feature with the UK Government. The divergence between the Scottish Government’s *Renewing Scotland’s Public Services* and the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan*, problematises the notion that there is a single set of ‘ideological features of public service reform in Scotland’ as the research question suggests. This is illustrated in the following table:

**Table 5.2: Key Narratives of *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan* and
*Renewing Scotland's Public Services***

Key <i>Scottish Enterprise Business Plan</i> Narratives	Key <i>Renewing Scotland's Public Services</i> Narratives
<i>No comparable strength of narrative, but a sub-narrative of being based in Scotland</i>	Consistent calls to Scottish nationality and the virtues of a Scottish nation state.
<i>No comparable strength of narrative, but a sub-narrative of being a competent organisation.</i>	Appeals to competence and authority.
A narrative of globalisation as threat and a driver for reform and austerity, no relationship to pillar of 'prevention'.	A desire to protect Scotland from the UK Government as the driver of reform and austerity, presented within a pillar of 'prevention'.
<i>No comparable narrative.</i>	Support for the delivery of place-based services.
<i>No comparable narrative.</i>	Valuing of public sector staff.
<i>No comparable narrative.</i>	A more generic support for reforms that will improve performance.

In turn, this then makes identifying divergence from the UK more difficult as there is no clear baseline for comparison. It could be asserted that, with the exception of the globalisation narrative, it appears that Scottish Enterprise has not significantly absorbed or translated UK Government

narratives of reform. However, such a finding may be stretching credible claims too far: the tonal flatness of the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan* makes the identification of narratives of any kind generally very difficult. A more reasonable conclusion would be that the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan* has generally not absorbed and translated any governmental (UK or Scottish) narratives of reform. In terms of addressing the research question about a Scottish ideology diverging from the UK, the data analysed appears to indicate more of an *isolation* from government narratives rather than a planned *divergence*.

5.12 Conclusion

When examining the meso-level organisational documents in isolation, a set of messy findings were produced, which are difficult to clearly trace back to the meta-narrative texts of government. The concerns expressed have a frequently weak link to the broader reform documents and there is limited explicit attempt to link these texts to either *Open Public Services* or *Renewing Public Services*, challenging understanding of translation and reproduction of meta-narratives in public service reform. The *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan* provided the full set of Scottish Government targets and outcomes in the closing pages of the document, demonstrating a clear intended relationship to Scottish Government overall aims. However there was no specific consideration of reform aims or narratives that could reasonably be expected to underpin a forward plan for such an organisation. The following Table 5.3 provides an indication of the comparative key narratives arising in the four different spaces of the

UK Government macro and meso, and Scottish Government macro and meso documents.

Table 5.3: Comparing Key Narratives in *Open Public Services*, *The Way Ahead*, *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan* and *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*

Key Scottish Enterprise Business Plan Narratives	Key Renewing Scotland's Public Services Narratives	Key Open Public Services Narratives	Key The Way Ahead Narratives
<i>No comparable strength of narrative, but a sub-narrative of being based in Scotland</i>	Consistent calls to Scottish nationality and the virtues of a Scottish nation state.	No explicit references to nation state, combined with implicit/ symbolic references to nation-state.	<i>Nationality considerations absent</i>
<i>No comparable narrative strength. Sub-narrative of being a competent organisation.</i>	Appeals to competence and authority.	Appeals to authority and power assertion.	Presentation of managerial competence and authority
Narrative of globalisation as threat and driver for reform/ austerity, no relationship to 'prevention' pillar.	Desire to protect Scotland from UK Government as driver of reform/ austerity, presented within 'prevention' pillar.	Globalisation as threat and a driver for reform and austerity.	Performance issues as a driver of reform
<i>No comparable narrative.</i>	Support for the delivery of place-based services.	<i>No comparable narrative.</i>	<i>No comparable narrative.</i>
<i>No comparable narrative.</i>	Valuing of public sector staff.	Denigration of public sector staff.	Sub-narrative of some staff valuable, others not.
<i>No comparable narrative.</i>	Generic support for reforms that will improve performance.	Sub-narrative of under-performance.	Generic support for reforms that will improve performance.
"Equal opportunities" are mentioned but do not form a coherent narrative.	<i>No comparable narrative strength. Equality a sub-set of the 1st pillar of reform (prevention).</i>	Rhetoric of equality.	<i>No comparable narrative.</i>
<i>No comparable narrative.</i>	<i>No comparable strength of narrative. Transparency a sub-set of the 4th pillar of reform (performance).</i>	Calls for greater public sector transparency.	<i>No comparable narrative.</i>

This chapter set out to address the main research question 'How is public service reform discursively framed in Scotland and what are its underlying themes?' and also the related subsidiary research questions: What are the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland and how do they diverge from UK narratives of public service reform?; and Do Scottish and UK policy texts follow different 'plots' in their stories? The case study analysis problematised these questions and their underlying assumptions by revealing complex relationships between the discursive framing of reform by government and its agencies, and a seemingly isolationist tendency in the development of published documents.

Chapter One detailed the limitations of existing literature in this area, that whilst there is a significant body of literature considering public sector reform (Hood, 1991; Newman 2000; 2001; Clarke, 1998; 2004) and a more limited attempt to consider this in the context of devolution (McTavish, 2003; Riddell, 2003) there is a general lack of understanding of the role of discourse or ideology. The dominant political science perspective in Scotland (Parry, 2002; Keating, 2005) shows little interest in rhetorical or textual analysis, meaning that the literature is silent on the way in which reform is understood and translated by actors. The detailed discourse analysis undertaken on the four policy documents builds on and complements work (Mooney and Scott, 2005) that problematizes notions of the 'New Scotland' (Hassan and Warhurst, 2002; Paterson et al, 2001; Bechofer and McCrone, 2004) by finding that despite the Scottish Government employing a *rhetorical* difference in the aims of public service reform, a key Scottish agency does not translate this rhetoric into its own

discourse. This evidence destabilizes ongoing political debates that Scotland is inherently different to the rest of the UK.

The analysis presented in this chapter has also added to understandings of governance in government and its agencies. Chapter One explained how theorists (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003; Newman, 2007) imagine the construction of governance in flux, constantly requiring legitimisation whilst being managed and changed by actors through textual work. The detailed analysis of this chapter provides evidence of this reconstruction at work: diverse policy agents have re-shaped narratives of reform to suit local circumstances and agendas with scant respect for hegemonical structures and narratives. The complexity of this 'pluri-national' (Keating, 2009) state is evident in the mixed and contradictory narratives identified in this chapter.

This chapter has highlighted the importance of not over-emphasising assumed commonalities or differences in UK and Scottish bodies, their culture and the narratives they use. This theme is explored further in the following chapter, which focuses on interview data from the case studies, with a view to finding traces of the meta and meso-narratives at the micro level. Chapter Three explained how this thesis' epistemological approach is based on a Foucauldian influenced perspective on the construction of meaning, whereby understanding is controlled and challenged using discursive devices. The following chapter continues to utilise this understanding to explain the use of narratives to construct meaning in the

organisations' work and how it relates to their devolved or reserved powers. These narratives are used to support the subjects' construction of the ideological features of public service reform and have become a discursive device to create and control meaning. The subjects use this device in the exercising of their power and seek to ensure that any dispersed power adheres to this constructed meaning.

CHAPTER 6

PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERS: IDENTIFYING TRANSLATION IN INDIVIDUAL DISCOURSE

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the interview data, providing a micro-level analysis of the translation and operationalisation of public sector reform narratives. The various narratives identified at the meta and meso levels in the government and organisational documents are compared with the key interview narratives, revealing some alignment in discourses used but also some new or changed narratives. There was significant evidence, as discussed in the previous chapter, of wider governmental meta-narratives being ignored or contradicted by the interviewees. The chapter findings continue to challenge notions of Scottish difference and a 'New Scotland' and presents new evidence that whilst there may be rhetorical differences in ideologies, these differences are frequently lost, overlooked, mistranslated or inconsequential to the managers responsible for public sector delivery.

The focus within this Chapter continues to be the main research question regarding the discursive framing of public service reform in Scotland. However, this chapter also addresses the subsidiary research questions about Scottish ideology and for the first time in the thesis, 'Do Scottish and UK public sector staff interpret generic text differently, and if so, why?' In this specific chapter it is especially useful to reflect on the discussion in

Chapter One regarding public sector staff not being one homogeneous group.

The first part of the chapter sets out to identify the main narratives at work in the interview data and compares it with the narratives identified at a meta and meso level. The latter part of the chapter then develops these findings further by examining the contradictions and ambiguities present in both the content of the narratives used and the way the interviewees presented themselves to the interviewer.

6.2 Searching for Meta-narratives in the Discourse of Public Sector Leaders

Chapter 4 identified a number of meta-narratives in the UK and Scottish public sector reform documents examined. These included:

Open Public Services (UK)

- An absence of explicit references to the nation state, combined with implicit and symbolic references to the nation-state.
- Appeals to authority and the assertion of power.
- A rhetoric of equality.
- The denigration of public sector staff.
- Calls for greater transparency in the public sector.
- A narrative of globalisation.

Renewing Scotland's Public Services (Scottish Government)

- Consistent calls to Scottish nationality and the virtues of a Scottish nation state.
- Appeals to competence and authority.

- A desire to protect Scotland from the UK Government.
- Support for the delivery of place-based services.
- Valuing of public sector staff.
- A more generic support for reforms that will improve performance.

The previous chapter explained that these meta-narratives were largely absent (and sometimes contradicted) in the organisational meso-narratives examined. The *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan* was generally very limited in engagement with narratives, with the significant point of note being an alignment with the UK imperative for reform being embedded in globalisation. Explicitly however, Scottish Enterprise appeared to align themselves with the Scottish Government by reproducing the Scottish Government's National Outcomes as part of their Business Plan.

CICA's *The Way Ahead* was richer in narrative style, presenting a number of key stories:

- Confidence in own identity that does not require explanation.
- A personalised approach, whereby senior directors were apparently driving change.
- An explicit narrative that organisational failure was not the fault of staff, combined with contradictions and a sub-textual indication that staff were to blame.
- A depiction by managers as themselves as heroes.
- Presentation of reform as a logical progression of good management.

The most significant parallel between how the interviewees in both organisations spoke about reform, with the meta and meso-narratives identified, was the routine use of a heroes and villains based story-telling to communicate success or reasons for difficulty and failure. The key point of note in the following section is that the use of a heroes and villains narrative was common to both organisations and no discernible difference could be identified related to nation or devolution.

6.3 A Story of Heroes and Villains?

Chapters Four and Five identified evidence of the narrative of hero in the documents examined, and this narrative device appeared also in the interview data. The hero is a common motif in organisational literature (Campbell-Evans, 1993; Gabriel, 1995; Hofstede, 1997; Cunliffe, 2012) and in the data was complemented with the identification of the discursive device of villain. The language and concepts of heroes and villains construct particular narrative frames to constrain understanding into a simplistic 'for' or 'against' depiction of a complex social situation. The identification of this framing is important in understanding the data because it identifies the priority of the story-teller in the story they are re-telling to their audience. It is the identification of this prioritisation that helps the analysis to make sense of a complex and sometimes contradictory re-telling of events.

6.3.1 Self as Hero

The most common hero in these interviewees' stories was themselves. All the interviewees spent some time constructing a narrative of themselves as hero and providing examples, usually unprompted and sometimes without a clear relationship to the topic, of their own role in success or the tale's happy ending. The following example is fairly typical of how successful change was framed by the interviewees.

So for example, if you take the [names major modernising project] again, I've been to Scottish Enterprise's Executive team and said OK if this goes in this direction and if we're serious about making this...And my Executive leader said yes... (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

This quote shows a clear desire to impress upon the audience that the story-teller has personally brought significant positive reform into the organisation, with the implied indication that organisational success can be attributed to the subject. Baker (2006) understands this type of construction as a deliberate 'repositioning of participants'. This is the work undertaken by the storyteller to position themselves and others in the narrative to understand their own and others' roles. In these case studies, the positioning or repositioning of the storyteller as hero, constructs a narrative that supports the dominant power structure. The senior leader can lay claim to their authority by reference to this hero narrative where they are responsible for organisational success, and by so doing, the

narrative both suppresses alternative understandings of the organisation and consolidates the subject's personal power.

It may also be reasonably assumed that this repositioning of self as hero is no neutral unwrinkling of the story but also driven by a desire to present oneself in an attractive light within an interview situation. Whilst the artificial interview context may encourage participants to manipulate the presentation of a story to their benefit, it may be that many leaders will automatically self-present a positive image in most or all situations. This self-presentation by successful leaders has been examined by Schein:

The simplest explanation of how leaders get their message across is that they do it through *charisma* – that mysterious ability to capture the subordinates' attention and to communicate major assumptions and values in a vivid and clear manner. (Schein, 2010: 245).

The depiction of self as hero would assist this creation of charisma and communication of messages, not least since as detailed in the following section, most interviewees saw communications as itself capable of playing the role of hero or villain.

The creation of self as hero assists the leader to increase their power and legitimacy in the organisation: if their abilities and actions are constructed as key to the organisation's success, this will give the leader legitimacy in times of challenging public sector reform. In terms of the research questions, the similarity of plot character, and the tendency of leaders from both organisations to use this plot character (and play the role

themselves), indicates that this is a discursive device utilised across organisational and hegemonic differences. This provides detailed discursive evidence to support the work of theorists (Campbell-Evans, 1993; Gabriel, 1995; Hofstede, 1997; Cunliffe, 2012) that the hero is a common narrative device. The existence of this device in both case-study organisations builds on the existing literature by finding this device at work in diverse organisations and contexts.

6.3.2 Communications as Hero and Villain

As outlined in the last chapter, the UK Government's *Open Public Services* had a narrative of communications and open access to information as an important aim of reform. This issue could be traced in the interviews from both case-study organisations. Although many of the interviewees sometimes used a simplistic template of 'heroes' and 'villains', the telling of these stories about heroes and villains was less straightforward than may be imagined. Most of the interviewees did not only identify individuals or groups of people as heroes and villains, but they also suggested that the more ambiguous concept of 'communications' could itself prove to be a hero or villain. In this way, communications takes on a myth-like status that supersedes the importance of any individuals or groups within the organisation, whilst serving as a tool for story-telling. Schein identifies that:

As a group develops and accumulates a history, some of this history becomes embodied in stories about events and leadership behaviour...the story – whether in the form of a parable, legend, or

even a myth – reinforces assumptions and teaches assumptions to newcomers. (Schein, 2010: 268).

The creation of a parable that identifies the concept of communications as the villain of the tale allows failure to be recognised without the uncomfortable task of naming individuals or groups of people. This is helpful because it not only avoids confrontation or interpersonal conflict, it also provides a device for negating the expressed views of others by constructing a story that the reason why they are unhappy is because they do not understand or have not had the changes communicated to them in the right way. In this way any failures are the failure of communication rather than a mistake made by the senior leader.

In particular, a failure of communication was used by most interviewees as a very overt explanation as to why staff were unhappy with change. The use of communications as a scapegoat in this way implies another use of the temporal and spatial framing discussed previously in relation to the way in which budget cuts were used to justify non-related staff change. One interviewee said:

...I came to the conclusion at the end of December that the use of the word 'Target Operating Model' which we think is our strategy and vision has been lost, so jargon and terminology [is important]. So 'vision and strategy' instead of 'Target Operating Model' and 'direction of travel' - we'd started using stuff like that. To some extent I think what we've been communicating has fallen on deaf ears or not really understood (CICA interviewee).

Similarly, communications were commonly depicted as a hero with a suggestion that different and better communications could fix problematic issues and make people happy. For example:

Q: What do you think has changed that 'the beleaguered Scottish Enterprise' is no longer in the papers every day?...A: I think it's a combination of a number of factors...we have a much clearer remit, it's a much smaller and tighter remit, it makes it much easier for us to communicate;

I've got a fantastic graph that I'm going to release to the staff... (Both Scottish Enterprise interviewees).

In the narrative used by some interviewees, this depiction of communications as potential hero appeared to be taken to an extreme, with the interviewee appearing to be explicitly suggesting that it is communications that will be key to staff happiness and acceptance of reforms, rather than the actions taken as part of this reform. For example:

...if you don't get [message] consistency that's how rumours start about a programme, that's how staff get upset (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

When discussing communications as hero there was also a tendency to lapse into 'management speak' and use jargonistic words and phrases to flesh out the story, for example:

...our communications and engagement strategy, our philosophy if you like, is to have highly visible leaders, highly accessible managers and an employee voice. (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

The construction of the nebulous 'communications' as villain not only allows no-one in particular to be blamed, but also assists with organisational cohesion, in turn making challenge to the manager's power and authority less likely. Again, the utilisation of communications as a hero or scapegoat by both organisations suggests that the view of theorists such as Store (1989, cited in Fischer, 2003) that there are limited narrative structures that all organisations will employ. This provides some evidence to address the research question about a Scottish ideological divergence from the UK, by appearing to show limited divergence in narratives at a micro-level.

Alongside the construction of self as hero, and communications as hero or villain, depending on context, there was also evidence of the construction of other groups as villains, which is a less commonly cited device in narrative literature.

6.3.3 Common Villains

To a lesser extent, some interviewees in both organisations identified external consultants as villains, professing at best an irritation and at worst a more complete picture of their impediment to useful change. The identification of external consultants as villains to progress is arguably surprising – as both case studies were key agencies with modernising reform missions. This negativity was prevalent in both case-study organisations:

2007/2008...[when the change process was better handled]...we did it ourselves, we didn't employ any consultants...(Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

...I think that what they [the consultants] didn't factor in or they forgot generally in my view was they forgot they were dealing with a public sector organisation...[lists problems] So [the time of the consultants]...was a difficult time I would say and they were there for about six months before our new Chief Executive was appointed... and the new directors came in...And I don't think they were too impressed [with the consultants] (CICA interviewee).

However, a more consistent group portrayed as villains in all of the interviews was the fairly nebulous group of 'staff'. Schein cautions against the apparent tendency to search for simple scapegoats who can be blamed for reform failure.

...culture is deep, wide and complex and we should avoid the temptation to stereotype organisational phenomena in terms of one or two salient dimensions. (Schein, 2010: 188).

Regardless of Schein's warning, some interviewees did cast groups of their colleagues as villains and stereotype them as responsible for change failure or delay. These villainous staff were always those who were explicitly or covertly expressing dissent at the changes being introduced and were part of a narrative that was searching for a device to ensure that these dissenters were side-lined from the mainstream culture of the organisation.

Dissent in organisations is widely recognised in academic organisational literature as being a useful way of improvement (Kassing, 2011). However, within the case-study organisations there was no evidence identified that there was any understanding of the value of dissent or those who expressed challenge of the organisational reform. Interviewees went some way to portray staff opposing or questioning change as 'other' and plainly explained how they were being pushed outside the core of the organisation. One interviewee went so far as to say:

...in any change programme, you'll have those that are fully engaged, those that are not engaged, and those that are actively disengaged. I think that we have a disproportionately high number of people in this organisation who are disengaged...as an organisation we should concentrate our efforts on those who are

not engaged, because they've got a much shorter journey to make than those who are actively disengaged... there will remain a small group of people who will always hark back to how it used to be, and how it is never going to be as good again...there are ... some that will never change... if there is a continuing disconnect between someone's personal agenda and the organisational agenda,...[then] he or she will move on. (CICA interviewee).

The creation of groups of 'difficult' staff as other, was facilitated by a use of pronouns in exclusionary discourse. A judicious use of 'we' and 'they' creates a normative fact based narrative that 'we' belong to, whereas 'they' are outside:

The change isn't just directly to *their* jobs or *their* numbers or who *they* work for or who *they* have working for them...The change is also to how *they* behave, how *they're* assessed, *what we expect of them*.
[All emphasis added] (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

The example above typifies this clarification that it is a villainous group of staff who must change, the nebulous 'they'. 'We' on the other hand, are the normative ones outside this imperative change who will "expect" that the other must change to become part of the 'we'.

Some of the interviewees were quite specific about whom these dissenting villains were and interviewees in both case study organisations identified 'middle managers' as the usual 'bad guys'. For example:

[the staff survey showed that we needed to improve leadership] ...not the most senior team and not the line manager – that middle leadership. (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

This managerialist theme of the need to address 'poor managers' as defined and identified by the interviewees was a theme reiterated in both organisations, for example:

I think there's a number of things that probably do need to change. One is our leadership and management style...I would probably say that most of our management team, particularly our middle managers, are not necessarily equipped at the moment. (CICA interviewee).

...a lot of the old managers who have now all left, its only now that the old legacy is kind of beginning to dissipate...they grew in an environment where you would get an instruction from the head office but you would check it with your local manager as to whether you were going to do it or not.... Essentially we're trying to establish a thing where the managers have now to think of themselves as leaders whose job is to implement the organisation's vision and to lose all that old habit about 'I'm going to get the best for my bit of the business', which was the culture that people came from. (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

There is substantial interview data from both organisations of a tendency to base story-telling and memory on a simple dichotomy of heroes and villains. For the UK CICA, the casting of staff as villains recalls the approach set out in the UK Government's *Open Public Services*. It is harder to track this narrative in the meso-level narrative of *The Way Ahead*, but as explained in the previous chapter, a critique of staff appears as a ghost or sub-narrative to the main story. More importantly for CICA, the tendency for senior managers to cast themselves as heroes, directly contradicts the *Open Public Services* rhetoric of self-serving civil servants, and problematises CICA's own sub-textual blaming of managers for organisation failure.

Scottish Enterprise interviewees did not show significant difference from CICA in their use of a heroes and villains narrative. From this perspective, they arguably both support the *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* rhetoric of public sector staff (managers as heroes) and refute it (but some staff are bad).

These findings undermine key assumptions in the research questions, that there are national differences in public service reform narratives that can be uncovered. Similarly, both organisations surprisingly identified external consultants as villains, especially since they appeared generally supportive of private sector practice, as discussed further in the following section.

Of specific interest is the finding that the extensive literature on the value of dissent in organisations (Kassing, 2011) appears to be entirely unknown

to these senior managers encountering staff dissent on a regular basis. All the managers clearly demonstrated a desire to demonise and suppress dissenters. The previous chapter suggested that the case-study organisations showed signs of isolationism, in their apparent unawareness of broader government narratives. This finding appears to be strengthened in terms of the organisations' engagement with ideas outside of government and their immediate sphere on staff management. In terms of the research questions, this again builds a picture of a certain type of autonomy for these organisations, where the senior managers are untouched by broader narratives outside of their workplace. This further destabilises the notions of Scottish difference and distinctiveness (Paterson et al., 2004; Stewart, 2004a; Poole and Mooney, 2006) by providing evidence of organisations operating without significant cognisance of their national policy environment.

6.3.4 Summary of A Story of Heroes and Villains

This section has provided detailed evidence of the commonality of narrative structure in the stories told by senior managers in both CICA and Scottish Enterprise with regards to the plot characters of hero and villain. This builds on previous evidence of these structures at work at the meso and macro level. The most significant aspect of this finding in terms of the research questions, is the further destabilisation of notions of Scottish difference (Paterson et al. 2004; Stewart, 2004a; Poole and Mooney, 2006). Whilst the previous chapter showed that at a macro rhetorical level, there were substantive differences between the governments, the micro-

level interview data has aligned with the meso-level organisational document level in finding similarity between the Scottish and UK bodies.

The focus within this section is the main research question of Scottish discursive framing, the subsidiary research question about the distinctiveness of a Scottish ideology, and for the first time in the thesis, 'Do Scottish and UK public sector staff interpret generic text differently, and if so, why?'. Whilst the former questions have continued to be destabilised, in terms of the latter question, the evidenced collated on the subject of the construction of heroes and villains, suggests that public staff may not be aware of generic texts, rather than interpreting them in any way.

6.4 A Story of the Private Sector and New Managerialism?

The previous section of this chapter identified both the use of jargon in the construction of communications as hero, and a continuing theme of managerialist improvements to strengthen the organisation and fight back against the villain of poor management. However the managerialist theme was also a strong discursive device of its own, and did not always appear only as a sub-story to another narrative. As outlined in Chapter One, the public sector has been subject to regular neo-liberal managerialist reforms over successive decades, based on an understanding that the private sector is generally more efficient and should be utilised in public service provision (Hood, 1991; McTavish, 2003; Sapru, 2010).

This section provides some insight into the research questions around discursive framing, SNP divergence and the potential for a distinctive Scottish ideology. The evidence gathered in this respect again suggests that both organisations were conforming to a wider dominant narrative that ideologically framed their reforms within a construct of the merits of privatisation and the central tenets of new managerialism. In this respect, there was limited evidence of the use of discursive devices to drive change differently in Scotland, or to create or utilise a uniquely Scottish narrative.

Managerialist jargon was sometimes used in a freestanding way unlinked to any apparent narrative. This had the effect of answering questions opaquely and allowing an answer to be given that had no clear meaning and did not articulate any view. Baker (2006) refers to this type of device as 'frame ambiguity' – the deliberate use of language in a way that can mean different things to different groups.

Q: Your job title...what does it mean? A: I'm responsible for Scottish Enterprise's, basically all our external communications, media relations, public relations. Also all our customer engagement, all our engagement with Scottish businesses...Obviously that's much less now about communications and much more about engagement and a channel for delivery..;

Q: Can you tell me more about your role and what [your job title] means? A: I have a number of service teams that I'm responsible for.

So I've got human resources, internal communications, facilities management and health & safety and procurement. It's like a Corporate Services Director but a lot of it's about people, so hence the title." (Both Scottish Enterprise interviewees).

Taken out of context and in isolation many of these jargonistic phrases are difficult to interpret. For example a reference to an 'open innovation system' appeared to refer to a staff suggestion scheme but the rebranding clouds understanding and creates space for the concept to be seen as more than a 'run-of-the-mill' staff suggestion scheme.

Other more common managerialist words and jargon were repeated throughout interviews, with a reoccurrence of phrases such as 'engagement', 'joint working', 'leadership', "attraction, retention and high motivation of talent" and "resonance". In one interview the word 'talent' was used several times as a personal pronoun to refer to 'special' individuals. The same interviewee also used nouns as verbs, for example:

...so that's a really difficult thing to *message* to staff..." [emphasis added] (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

This interviewee also had a tendency to express answers with a patronising tone by sometimes providing an explanation of the use of

'correct' terminology and the importance of certain words or phrasing, for example:

...it's about how we select, which you would think of as recruitment
(Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

Taken together, the speech patterns of this particular interviewee suggest a personal or group development of a particular form of managerialist language and its deliberative deployment as a discursive device. This 'sub-language' was expressed with confidence and fluidity by the interviewee, with the unusual phrasing and slightly patronising tone appearing well-rehearsed and used. Although this particular speech pattern stood out from the other interviewees, as a discursive device for the control and creation of power this is not necessarily an unusual approach. The use of a distinctive managerialist discourse allows the subject to clearly situate themselves as within the dominant discourse, both supporting this hegemony and deriving their own power from it. Additionally, by using an apparently more developed personalised version of this discourse, the subject constructs a position of apparent supremacy, mastery and projection of self as expert. This again works as a discursive device to create and maintain power.

Within some interviews there was a saturation of certain management clichés (for example 'no-brainer') and implied facts such as staff moving through 'change curves'. This increased rapidly in one SE interview when

asked “You speak positively about change, but you must encounter staff who are against you or against the change.” The interviewee then provided their longest answer, speaking unprompted for 1,473 words and referring to numerous quasi-academic approaches and commonly taught managerial clichés about change and staff management as if factually accurate. This apparent determination to prove dissenting voices wrong through appeals to evidence was traced in other discourses expressed. A number of the interviewees and documents made claims to authenticity and quality, for example by having a ‘Professor’ running staff training courses. Not surprisingly, most of the texts examined showed a clear concern with proving the current competence and knowledge of the organisation, for example:

[there’s been a big increase in staff leaving]...we predicted that would happen... (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

These narratives of competence, using managerialist and expert claims to knowledge, provide the useful function of justifying and legitimising reforms, particularly in the face of impediments or villains to ‘progress’. The commonality of managerialist reforms and language across the stories of both organisations show a distinct lack of difference between case- studies. It is important to note that the role of the private sector was not fully embraced, as the previous section’s consideration of the casting of external consultants as villains showed. However, this rejection of consultants was also common in the micro-discourse of both organisations. This provides further evidence of both a lack of Scottish

distinctiveness and a general alignment in how the Scottish and UK bodies are approaching and presenting issues.

6.5 A Story of a March of Progress?

A 'march of progress' narrative can be typified as a depiction of the current state as progressively better than what has gone before and that the future will be better still. This understanding has a perception of change as a linear story-line with knowledge changing as part of a gradual progression based on the accumulation of facts and is present in many historical philosophical works:

The History of the Human Species as a whole may be regarded as the unravelings of a hidden plan of nature for accomplishing a perfect state of civil constitution for society. (Kant, 1784).

Poetic imagination has put the Golden Age in the cradle of the human race, amid the ignorance and brutishness of primitive times; it is rather the Iron Age which should be put there. The Golden Age of the human race is not behind us but before us; it lies in the perfection of the social order. Our ancestors never saw it; our children will one day arrive there; it is for us to clear the way. (de Saint-Simon, 1814).
(Both cited in Kumar, 1978: 13).

This approach to understanding the world appears to be magnetic and since the Nineteenth Century sociology and the wider social sciences has been increasingly concerned with thinking about the future and the

progress of humanity. This narrative is both embedded in the historic work of social thinkers and variously used to herald the death of grand narratives and/or an era of utopia (Bell, 1967).

A 'march of progress' narrative continues to be firmly embedded in many organisations and is often key to how changes are understood and shaped, with some theorists identifying "narratives of continuous and transformational change" as a 'new' way of reading discourse in organisational change (Senior and Swailes, 2010: 384). This narrative could be interpreted as a tool for managing staff and promoting positivity in the face of 'organisational stabilisers' (Painter, 2006) as outlined in Chapter One. However, the Foucauldian perspective underpinning this thesis challenges the march of progress narrative by focusing on discontinuity and undermining claims that history is progressive and continuous, moving through stages of development with increasing knowledge and maturity (McHoul and Grace, 1995).

An explicit march of progress narrative was not dominant in either *Open Public Services* or *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*. However, the idea of a forward progression towards ever greater improvement is a subtextual assumption to both documents, coming closer to the surface in *Renewing Scotland's Public Services'* focus on 'Improving Performance'. CICA's *The Way Ahead* does explicitly follow this narrative, with its presentation of change as the logical progression of good management.

At the micro-level, interviewees from both case-study organisations commonly used a 'march of progress' style narrative. Such a commonality

raises questions around why the same narrative can be beneficially used by both UK and Scottish public sector bodies. The existing strength and omnipresence of this narrative means that it is an easily called upon repertoire by storytellers and that it is rapidly understood by audiences within their existing knowledge frameworks. For a UK body, this narrative supports their hegemonic position by reaffirming their historical progress and supremacy. For a Scottish body, the same march of progress narrative can be used differently to hail a more progressive future (perhaps as an independent state) and lay claim to a site-specific Scottish progress and knowledge that cannot be encapsulated within the dominant UK discourse.

There was a range of ways in which the march of progress narrative was operationalised within these case-studies. All the interviewees were quick to attribute negative ways of working with a former regime, sometimes linking this to roles of identified villains, for example:

...some of the challenges that I've had in the past [were due to a different way of doing things] maybe under a previous Chief Executive. (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

To a lesser extent, this march of progress narrative was often portrayed as a story of the organisation's change as part of a 'bigger story'. This may sometimes be linked to the narrative of globalisation but also signifies the importance of the contextualisation of reform, compared to the changes

themselves. All the interviewees showed a desire to put the reforms into a wider context, rather than suggest that any change had a single, standalone end. Questions to one interviewee regarding specific change were met with comments like:

The development of the Scottish Parliament has coincided with a sequence of structural changes within Scottish Enterprise. There's four stages to the development of Scottish Enterprise... (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

The march of progress narrative identified in these texts was relatively unsophisticated in approach and appeared as though all the interviewees and authors were telling an assumed story that could only be understood through one reading and an implicit understanding. At least in the expression of their thoughts through the interviews, these individuals seemed convinced of their own single social reality. From the social constructionist and Foucauldian approach previously discussed, this social reality has been created, adapted and communicated through discourse. However the individuals interviewed showed no apparent awareness of any form of multiple or overlapping understandings, going some way to explaining why those disagreeing with reforms were easily identified as 'other' and side-lined.

Using Schein's (2010) earlier outline of the usefulness of parables and myths, the straightforward narrative of the march of progress serves a clear purpose in these organisations. The understanding of change as a single reality and an apparent lack of critical reflection provides an easily

understood and communicable version of events which tries to ensure that underpinning assumptions about the organisation are uniform. All of the interviewees spoke about their organisational reform as concrete positive action and showed low appreciation that there could be differing interpretations of either the changes themselves or their impacts. For example a CICA interviewee talked about the ceasing of paper applications and introduction of web-only applications purely in positive terms and without the recognition of opposing views:

...we have introduced an on-line application process and we want that to grow further still, so there's bits about encouraging stakeholders who support the application process like Victim Support, like APIL, who would help applicants with applications to use the on-line process. Because we see that as a way of ensuring that we get good quality data early on in the process and also helps with things like eligibility... (CICA interviewee).

The apparent lack of difference in the march of progress narrative between the UK and Scottish Governments and organisations, at the meta, meso or micro levels further undermines the assumptions of difference embedded in the research questions and the work of proponents of the 'New Scotland' (Hassan and Warhurst, 2002; Paterson et al., 2004; Bechofer and McCrone, 2004). This evidence appears to suggest a commonality of meta-narrative for the two governments as a justification and legitimisation for change and reform.

6.6 A Story of Financial Constraints as an Imperative for Change?

Chapter Three explained how this thesis' epistemological approach is based on a Foucauldian influenced perspective on the construction of meaning, whereby understanding is controlled and challenged using discursive devices. The following section utilises this understanding to explain the use of common narratives about financial constraints to construct meaning in the organisations' work and how it relates to their devolved or reserved powers. These narratives are used to support the subjects' construction of the ideological features of public service reform and have become a discursive device to create and control meaning. The subjects use this device in the exercising of their power and seek to ensure that any dispersed power adheres to this constructed meaning.

All the interviewees framed their responses within a current historical and social paradigm of resource constraints, public sector cuts and a strengthening of neo-liberal assumptions about 'good' practice in response to these constraints. However, within this expectation of resource constraints there was a difference in how interviewees from the two case-studies contextualised this assumption. For CICA, public service reform was discursively framed as an imperative of 'budget cuts' with an absent explicit presence of government and devolution. In Scottish Enterprise, while financial considerations were also part of the reform narrative, the narrative is more sophisticated and explanatory. Financial austerity is discursively linked to globalisation by the narrative and both the UK and Scottish Government are explicitly presented as important characters in the story, as illustrated in the following quotes:

...and just in monitoring almost what's happening globally with employment trends and pay rises, what's happening in the markets we hire people from, what's causing us consternation... (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

And we have to anyway [make these changes] because in the last 9 months the whole budgetary restrictions are very much driving us there anyway. (CICA interviewee).

The external changes reflect an environment that is common to every single part of government at the moment, in that funding is tight. (CICA interviewee).

Interviewees from both case study organisations, went on to effectively utilise the meta-narrative of budget cuts (whether linked to globalisation or not) to justify non-related change such as working conditions in CICA or management retraining in Scottish Enterprise. For example, one CICA interviewee outlined management difficulties in reducing flexi-time ranges for a specific group of staff in the organisation. However, the interviewee located this change in staff working conditions as being a specific phase of the programme of change reacting to financial constraints, known as the 'operating model':

Quite literally at the moment we're in the change to the working patterns in the customer service centre. So that's what we've called stage one of phase two of the operating model. (CICA interviewee).

Baker (2006) refers to this use of concepts as 'temporal and spatial framing', which is the deliberate framing or presentation of unlinked situations as linked through narrative. In this specific example, the change to staff working conditions is justified by linking it to the narrative of 'budget cuts' by the manager, who as the dominant power holder is able to largely control the discourse in use. The apparent inevitability of the budget cuts then frames the change in staff conditions as similarly inevitable and imperative that they must change. The narrative therefore both supports the construction and understanding of the change, and consolidates the dominant hegemony of the manager by providing a story to explain the authority of their decisions.

Within this story of financial change there was a sub-story of change as a survival mechanism. Most of the interviewees expressed an 'adapt or die' type approach to their work, framing the changes they were promoting as imperative. One said:

The external changes reflect an environment that is common to every single part of government at the moment, in that funding is tight. This means that the Ministry of Justice (and their Ministers) are having to review all parts of their expenditure to see where savings can be made. Obviously CICA is quite a big chunk of that expenditure and, as part of that overall review the MoJ [Ministry of Justice] are looking to see if the Scheme remains affordable. The fact that we cannot be certain about what the future holds for the

Scheme underpins everything we're thinking about in here. (CICA interviewee).

Besides its use as a sub-story to financial imperatives, the 'survivor' notion was used in other contexts by interviewees. For example:

...I lived through the times... (Scottish Enterprise interviewee speaking about political support).

I was 26 years in an extremely progressive organisation and survived 26 years in it. (CICA interviewee speaking about own enjoyment of change).

This depiction of 'survivor' can be interpreted in at least two different ways. Using Llewellyn's (2001) earlier narrative framework of the lost citizen on a quest to the final triumph, this can be reconstructed as a modernisation story where the subject replaces the citizen/ consumer as the 'lost' would-be hero on a quest for satisfaction. Alternatively, the construction of the subject as survivor (Gabriel, 1995) can also be interpreted as a more generic depiction of the previously discussed self as hero.

This section has highlighted how the same meta-narrative (financial constraints) has been absorbed by both case-study organisations and used to justify reform. At the macro level of government documents, financial austerity was blamed on different scapegoats (globalisation (by the UK Government) or the UK Government (by the Scottish Government)). At the meso-level, Scottish Enterprise surprisingly

translated and re-told the UK Government rhetoric of globalisation, whilst CICA appeared oblivious to both narratives and told a story only of organisational improvement. At the micro-level of the interviewees, Scottish Enterprise again re-told the UK Government's story, whilst CICA again did not contextualise the 'budget cuts' as being for any particular reason.

The contradictions and inherent messiness of this finding, appears to demonstrate the limited alignment in how government narratives are understood and re-told. Different audiences may receive or comprehend different stories from different story-tellers, and it is not possible to track linear translations in understanding and communication. In considering the subsidiary research question 'Do Scottish and UK public sector staff interpret generic text differently, and if so, why?', it must be stressed that whilst the analysis found no explicit narrative of staff awareness of the public documents and their narratives, both sets of interviewees broadly aligned in their narrative presentation with their respective organisation's documents. In terms of the research question 'What are the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland and how do they diverge from UK narratives of public service reform?', it would appear that at the micro-level the Scottish Enterprise interviewees have *converged* in their narrative of financial reform with the UK narrative, rather than diverged from it. This finding resonates with the work of Watson and West (2008), who also found that claims of Scottish policy and cultural difference are predominantly of a rhetorical nature and that powerful converging pressures drive agencies closer to similarity with the rest of the UK.

6.7 Stories of Politics and Culture

This chapter highlights that Scottish Enterprise rooted budgetary change in globalisation, whilst CICA expressed no awareness of why budgetary change was happening. This may be linked to the fundamental differences in the organisations and their functions. CICA is providing an individual service to victims of crime in the UK; whilst Scottish Enterprise is seeking to support economic growth through business. Hence Scottish Enterprise is likely to be more sensitive to, and more readily hail, considerations of international economic change.

Scottish Enterprise is based in the same country as the Scottish Government and interviewees spoke of shorter lines of communication with the SNP government than with Whitehall, while CICA interviewees showed a very low awareness and contact with their London based government. In terms of the Scottish Government, CICA showed an even more limited level of interest or engagement; whilst Scottish Enterprise interviewees spoke of an environment where they appeared to be growing closer to the current Scottish administration.

The Scottish Enterprise interviewees spoke at length about the impact of devolution and working with Scottish Ministers, a political reality not apparent in the CICA interviews, with most interviewees suggesting that they didn't come into contact with messages from the government. From a Foucauldian perspective, the CICA is situated within the dominant hegemony of the UK and therefore is less likely to be aware of its own situated nature within this hegemony. The 'other' Scottish Enterprise

however, situated within the Scottish Government, may have a greater awareness of the political constructs because it is outside the hegemony.

For example, the following quotes are indicative of the political awareness in Scottish Enterprise, contrasted with the more insular understanding within CICA:

...we can get a direct instruction and it can be from Alex Salmond to do something and there's hell to pay if you don't do it. (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

We're quite lucky in that that we do have quite a lot of devolved responsibility in relation to the running of the organisation and the delivery of the Scheme. (CICA interviewee).

In this sense, the Scottish Enterprise interviewees were quite overtly more politically aware and explicitly situated themselves within a political construct, potentially based on their experience of being outside the dominant hegemony. This was expressed by one interviewee as an unguardedly critical remark about the UK government compared with the Scottish Government:

So that's how it operates and because bearing in mind the money, it's HMRC that are the big beast there if you like, quite often we would hear about things second or third hand or we might be surprised by them. So from a UK perspective we're a relatively small fish because we don't put that much money into it or anything like that, so we're at the end of a chain...we've worked very hard all of us

in Scotland [and by implication UK hasn't]...And from a UK perspective the policy direction has shifted... (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

Some of these differences may be explained by the type of organisation that each case study is. They are both public service providers with an identifiable clientèle, but while CICA serves individual crime victims for their own benefit, Scottish Enterprise serves businesses with the aim of promoting economic growth. However, these differences in the type of organisation do not clearly map onto the key differences in culture identified, suggesting that the difference may be driven by either the senior leaders themselves, or something more fundamental embedded in the current devolution settlement or the set of relationships with government that are operationalised. It may be reasonable to assert that the UK governed CICA does not need to self-reflect on its dominant position and include its relationship with government in its story-telling, whilst the Scottish governed Scottish Enterprise has a narrative of UK dominance because they are in a marginalised position and can more clearly see this power imbalance.

In terms of the research questions, this difference does contribute to the kind of Scottish difference that theorists such as Paterson et al. (2004), Stewart (2004a) and Poole and Mooney (2006) have discussed. With regards to the key research question, this finding suggests that at the micro-level, there is a clear difference in how senior managers are constructing their political environment and engaging with government.

6.8 Inconsistencies and Ambiguity

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the data analysis of the interviewee transcripts, was attempting to accurately ascertain the narrative that the interviewee was telling, in order to compare it to the narratives identified in the published documents. Within each interview there appeared numerous contradictions and ambiguities and getting to the bottom of the stories told was complex. Gabriel cautions that:

Stories are emotionally and symbolically charged narratives. They do not present information or 'facts' about events...This is both their strength and their potential weakness. Stories will often compromise accuracy...they may contain inconsistencies, impressions, lacunae, non sequiturs, illogicalities and ambiguities...the inaccuracy, the distortion or even the lie in a story can offer a path to the deeper truth is contains. (Gabriel, 2000: 135).

An examination of inconsistency and ambiguity in these interviews will assist to address the chapter's focus on the main research question about discursive framing and the subsidiary research questions about a distinct Scottish ideology and 'Do Scottish and UK public sector staff interpret generic text differently, and if so, why?' The evidence gathered again fundamentally destabilised and problematised these research questions by finding consistency between the case study organisations in how they construct and utilise plot inconsistencies.

Building on the ideas identified in the previous section on the use of the 'hero' in narrative, this chapter further develops the depiction of self as the hero that keeps the organisation running, and in the presentation of this and other narratives, some evidence was found of a re-writing of history. There are two important surprising additional findings in this analysis. Firstly, the unanticipated critical reflection on the importance of not projecting the researcher's own constructions and perceptions onto the research subjects, and secondly, the apparent desire for some of the interviewees to confide in the interviewer. Both of these findings were consistent between the organisations and therefore further challenge expectations about Scottish difference.

6.8.1 Contradictions

The clearest contradictions in the interviews, were where the interviewee very openly contradicted themselves. In order to understand why this may happen, it's important to reflect on the role of the senior leader within their organisation and the political constructs to which they are subject. Schein argues that:

The leader may be conflicted and may be sending mutually contradictory messages. (Schein, 2010: 253).

This quote highlights that contradictions and plot inconsistencies don't appear in a vacuum, but are constructed within social contexts by actors. Some of these actors in positions of senior leadership will themselves

have ambiguous or contradictory feelings on a subject and this may leak into how they construct narratives, either consciously or accidentally. In the case of public sector reform, these leaders may not fully agree with all the changes they are responsible for implementing. Chapter One introduced Lipsky's classic study (1980) into the moral dilemmas of public sector workers and explained how many:

...often spend their work lives in a corrupted world of service. They believe themselves to be doing the best they can under adverse circumstances and they can develop techniques to salvage service and decision-making values within the limits imposed upon them by the structure of the work. They develop conceptions of their work and of their clients that narrow the gap between their personal and work limitations and the service ideal. These work practices and orientations are maintained even while they contribute to the perversion of the service ideal or put the worker in the position of manipulating citizens on behalf of the agencies from which citizens seek help. (Lipsky, 1980: p xii – xiii).

Senior leaders will make many micro-decisions every day regarding to what extent they will align their behaviour and actions with the reforms for which they have responsibility, and to what extent they will express their personal views. In these cases, there is unlikely to be a clear agree/disagree dichotomy. Subjective understandings and opinions are more likely to be within an unclear and non-rational spectrum, with leaders potentially able to see positives and negatives within the same reform, and

holding differing opinions on various aspects of reform within the same programme of change.

Some of these contradictory and confused feelings about reform may be constructed by, and helping to form, inconsistent narratives of public sector reform used by the different government administrations. Both sets of leaders in this research were exposed to UK and Scottish narratives of reform. Returning again to the subsidiary research question 'What are the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland and how do they diverge from UK narratives of public service reform?', this is predicated on the assumption of difference in the narratives used. As the subjects are influenced by these differing narratives, these two approaches may themselves produce conflict in the leader, and potentially lead to individual or group hybrid narratives that seek to reconcile two narratives into a single coherent story. However, it may also be the case that the original narratives will continue to leak out and highlight fundamental inconsistencies in the stories told. Just as it is unlikely that there is a clear agree/disagree dichotomy for any leader, it is similarly improbable that there is a dichotomy of government narratives, and boundaries between stories of UK, Scottish and hybrid reform are fuzzy and indistinct. This lack of clarity may compound personal confusion over where loyalties lie and which narratives should be used.

The most immediately striking way that these contradictions were exposed happened was when interviewees answered questions using a kind of 'doublespeak' that reversed the meaning, by giving an answer that in plain understanding is the opposite of the 'truth'. This particular oxymoronic

style of answering questions by interviewees was not straightforward however and was certainly not the same as 'lying'. Where this was identified, the interviewees made two opposing statements in quick succession, creating ambiguity and confusion as to what was being said and the position the interviewee was taking. As a discursive device this approach allowed an apparent answer to be given without clearly stating a position, for example:

Q: Do you get involved in communications to your own staff as well? Are you in charge of that as well or is that someone else?

A: Yes, I've got a team of about 28 people, 28-30 people right across the whole spectrum of what we talk about, so yes. Prior to this role I was Director of Corporate Communications for Scottish Enterprise so I had responsibility for external communications but also internal communications, responsible for employee engagement and things like that. I used to be responsible for that but I no longer am. (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

As a consciously used discursive device, this method of answering questions can be seen as another example of what Baker (2006) terms 'frame ambiguity'. As outlined earlier in this Chapter, this is when discourse is deliberately framed in a way that has an inconsistent meaning to different groups. This type of contradiction and confusion can be identified more broadly in government narratives about modernisation. The original *Modernising Government* (1999) White Paper contains a number of internal contradictions. For example in its introduction there is a

denigration of public sector workers, rapidly followed by a criticism of the denigration of public sector workers:

...a clear statement of what government is for. Not government for those who work in government; but government for people...those whose job it is to deliver public services...For too long, they have been denigrated. (Cabinet Office, 1999: 2, 4).

Frame ambiguity as a discursive device of leadership is useful because it allows concepts to be expressed and understood in different ways, attracting a wider audience into the belief that the concept includes their own view. In the case of public sector reforms it allows relatively contentious changes to be framed as desirable to different groups, including the public servants who are being required to change. Within public bodies working for different governments, the ambiguity can act as a bridge between different narratives and appear to address differing perspectives and priorities of reform.

It is important not to conflate a slip of the tongue in an interview with a conscious presentation of ambiguity, and apparent inconsistencies may have been caused by nervousness on the part of the interviewee, lack of concentration, boredom or an initial misunderstanding of the question. However, it can be noted that these apparent contradictions mostly appeared in response to relatively sensitive or uncomfortable questions, suggesting the possibility that some of the interviewees may have been consciously trying to self-present an ambiguous answer or an answer containing traces of doubt.

Most of these type of contradictions identified followed a defined pattern of giving a firm and clear initial answer, then following it with a caveat or contradiction that made the answer meaningless and open to interpretation in two opposing ways. For example:

Q. Why are people leaving? The pay freeze?

A. Yes...Most people don't work for Scottish Enterprise for the money anyway... (Scottish Enterprise interview).

Over and above these contradictions in single interviews, when comparing the sets of interviews from each case study there was evidence of contradictions within the same organisation. Within CICA, three of the interviews were held on the same day but the interviewees all gave different accounts of what the main changes happening within the organisation were. At a micro-level, the interviewees not only gave inconsistent accounts of the main changes, but were also contradictory as to why certain changes were happening. For example, two of the interviewees stated that the introduction of an Electronic Case Management System was a key change within the organisation but they cited different reasons for this, with one stressing reduction in costs and the other talking about customer service, which was entirely absent from the former's discourse.

...when you look at what we call electronic case management, there is a fairly significant shift there in terms of what people are expected to do – that's supported with collecting and using information

electronically rather than using lots of bits of paper. And that'll be a significant change in the way in which we do business and when it comes to those changes it comes to all too readily accepted issues about: how do we deploy? Is the product being given to us good to use and fit for purpose? Are we ready to sign it off? And again that's an impact of the Change Programme itself that we have to be mindful that the product has to be of sufficient quality for us to deliver the service, because if it's not and the service suffers and becomes more costly to perform, then it's not met one of its basic requirements. So the technology should be used to both simplify and improve the process but also to improve the service that we provide to the customer. (CICA interviewee 1).

We have an electronic case management system in development which we're still continuing to take forward. An effective case management system could reduce the cost of administration... The key thing about our Electronic Case Management System is that it has to be capable of in-house amendment." (CICA interviewee 2).

These examples can be seen as what Baker (2006) terms the selective appropriation of textual material. This is the deliberate omission of aspects that don't conform to the narrative that the actor wishes to promote. In this example, interviewee 1 consistently stressed the customer experience throughout the interview and appeared to suggest at many points that the changes being introduced at CICA were rationale, reasonable and for the good of customers and staff.

For me it all comes down to what is reasonable in life and therefore [if] we're asking people to do something that's reasonable then we should get a reasonable response to that. (CICA interviewee 1).

This framing facilitates the leader in breaking down larger, unpopular organisational changes into smaller changes with their own 'micro-arguments' (of reasonableness) to justify them. These micro-arguments allow the manager to overtly avoid the more contentious aspects of public sector reform, in terms of discussing and justifying them to both their audience and themselves. Here the leader is able to focus on the process of change as a series of smaller, compartmentalised, logical segments to reach an end goal of delivery and avoids fully engaging with the wider changes that are being implemented and their role within this programme. This can avoid conflict with other staff and avoid confrontation with any internal personal confusion or doubts that the manager may feel.

In contrast, interviewee 2 spoke far more about the importance of budget constraints, identifying ways to drive down costs and the greater responsibilisation of customers, rather than an improvement in their service experience. This difference in core personal narrative for change is likely to have influenced how they answered questions and the justifications they gave for change.

However, there is a difference between highlighting different aspects of the change to fit with a personal narrative, and a conscious reinterpretation or re-writing of discourse that is evidenced in interpersonal contradictions and points to traces of a re-writing of history. In the previous

chapter, the following story of change was identified in CICA's *The Way Ahead*:

I already knew that the National Audit Office were about to publish a highly critical report on the Authority but also knew that we had the backing of our sponsor department and some very committed staff who were ready to embrace the change necessary (CICA, 2008: 3).

This dominant narrative of a committed staff ready for change was directly contradicted by interviewees, for example as illustrated by the following excerpt from a transcript:

I think they (Chief Executive and Directors) recognised that changes had to be made and [the Chief Executive] was appearing in front of the PAC [Public Accounts committee of the House of Commons] and was heavily criticised there...at the same time they [the staff] knew what they were having to do ...but at the end of the day they [the Directors] were going to do what they wanted anyway...I mean there were many people [staff] who were very blinkered and like 'that'll never work' without giving it a try...the auditors had already been in because the PAC hearing was a result of the National Audit Office report... but a lot of people [staff] were set in their ways, they had worked there and not worked anywhere else, they were quite happy in their wee bit just doing what they were doing you know [their attitude was] don't ask me to do anything else because I'm quite happy... (CICA interviewee).

The previous chapter identified that running parallel with the dominant meso-narrative in *The Way Ahead* was a ghost narrative of staff resistance. This analysis at a micro-level with senior leaders within the organisation, reveals that this ghost narrative of staff resistance is the 'true' story for at least some leaders. This finding helps to explain the trace discourses at work in *The Way Ahead* and also, interestingly, pulls CICA into closer alignment with the UK *Open Public Services*' narrative of villainous civil servants, and in sharper contrast with the Scottish Government's *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*' story of highly valued public sector workers.

This apparent partial (but inconsistent) alignment in CICA discourse gives some evidence of a commonality of UK narrative, but since staff resistance is also present in the Scottish Enterprise micro-narratives, this challenges the assumption of Scottish distinctiveness, that is proposed by theorists (Paterson et al., 2004; Stewart, 2004a; Poole and Mooney, 2006). More generally, the inconsistency in narratives about staff across the organisations and governments at the micro, meso and meta levels continues to present a messy picture that cannot be untangled along national lines. The utilisation of inconsistent narratives about staff appears to be equally useful for the authority and legitimisation of both Scottish and UK narratives and does not clearly address the research questions and the assumption of Scottish difference.

6.8.2 Plot Inconsistencies

The previous chapter gathered data to address the research question about story plots, whilst this chapter considers the related subsidiary research question 'Do Scottish and UK public sector staff interpret generic texts differently, and if so, why?' The above examples of inconsistencies in accounts and using narrative analysis can be interpreted as *plot* inconsistencies, that may, or may not, be a conscious translation, re-telling or rejection of plots in organisational or government policy texts. If the discourse examined is largely imagined as a set of stories about the organisations, then where there are inconsistencies it may be that the same set of events has been subject to different plots in the re-telling.

A key consideration here is whether this use of different plots is due to an accident of application and innocent miscommunication, or due to a conscious and deliberate use of narrative as a discursive device. Although it is of course impossible to definitively attribute the intention of the interviewees and texts studied, the evidence suggests that plot inconsistencies were knowingly and deliberately presented to create a story about the organisation that the story-teller wanted the audience to believe. There was very limited evidence that this story-telling was a translation of meta-narratives present in government documents, and seemed to be driven by a concern for the organisation itself.

An organisation with a strong story of public service reform, where this reform is linear, uncontested and beneficial, can be used to create a story

of personal success and competence for the leader. In effect, the leader can be assumed to be directly or indirectly responsible for this success story. Within the context of the devolution settlement, successful reform for a UK body reinforces their hegemonic supremacy and implies the continued secondary status of the devolved administration. A successful reform story for a devolved public body on the other hand, provides a similar narrative of achievement but this time with potentially a stronger triumph due to the marginalised position of the subject/s. This story for a devolved body is one of both personal success and challenge to the dominant hegemony.

Looking at the quote on the previous page regarding staff reaction to requests to reform, there are clearly two alternative stories at work. In one published story the hero leader identifies a failing organisation and supported by loyal and committed staff makes transformative changes, and they all live happily ever after. In the second unpublished story a set of leaders try to make changes to address public criticism and are resisted by staff. The published story is unsurprisingly the story with the happy ending. The importance of the reputation of public bodies is key. A different CICA interviewee said that:

It was interesting that when we talked about this year's staff survey results and talked about that being published, not only on our website, but on MoJ's [Ministry of Justice] website, for the first time people I think actually said 'oh dear, we didn't realise that and we'd rather it hadn't been'. Now is that recognition that you're potentially, by being looked at the bigger picture, are we damaging our future? It

was very interesting that we actually said to people would you want it published? And it was a resounding 'no' because it could be damaging to our reputation.

Q. The general staff said that? Not the managers?

A. Yes, feedback from people, resounding by choice, 'no'. And no because it might damage our reputation.

Q. Was it published?

A. It has to be. So I think perhaps for the first time, we've got performance statistics we can be proud of but there's this real contradiction out there in the public face and not at a time necessarily when you want that level of attention. So anyone looking and saying is this a good place to work? You have to say it would suggest not. The people got quite vociferous around, ah the penny's dropping. Because I think people use the survey for their own reasons. There should be other mechanisms but it tells us that our mechanisms either aren't there or aren't robust enough for people to talk every day through the line. (CICA interviewee).

This account confirms the importance of the presentation of a positive public story, despite there being other stories that could be told about the same set of events. This account also exposes a frustration with staff who report negativity through the staff survey: "I think people use the survey for their own reasons", expressing a desire for the single positive narrative to be dominant and for alternative stories not to be expressed. Wood and Kroger (2000) call this 'facework', which is the use of discursive devices to protect the public view of oneself and others.

Whilst the CICA and Scottish Enterprise public documents both presented positive narratives of the organisations' stories, the culture expressed by the senior leaders in interviews was very different. The Scottish Enterprise interviews were not centrally organised and controlled and the interviewees made relatively unguarded remarks, which they did not change after viewing the transcripts. CICA however took a far more controlled approach, with interview access being arranged through the Chief Executive's Office and almost all the interviewees self-presenting a largely positive narrative of events. These transcripts were also more subject to editing by the interviewees, especially in relation to sensitive questions. This had the result of creating more polished CICA stories that often lacked authenticity or spontaneity for some of the interviewees. For these versions of events there was a more obvious 'story-telling' that affected the credibility of the accounts.

These differences may be due to the personal styles of the leaders within the organisations. However, linking these approaches back to the context of the organisations may offer further insight into why they would have taken such a different approach. The controlled and polished story-telling of the CICA reflects both a more competent ability to carve a single narrative and a self-view as within a single dominant hegemony, with limited awareness and engagement with alternative stories or views. Whether coincidental or not, this aligns with the UK Government's *Open Public Services*, in its ability to communicate a coherent narrative with skill and effectiveness. Scottish Enterprise's looser narrative control and dominance may reflect their greater awareness of alternative stories, due

to their own partial exclusion and marginalisation outside the dominant hegemony and governance arrangements.

In this respect, the data analysis is providing evidence of Scottish difference (Paterson et al., 2004; Stewart, 2004a; Poole and Mooney, 2006), albeit in a completely new way to that identified previously by theorists. Whilst existing literature has identified 'facts' about Scottish politics and policy that are proposed to be different to the rest of the UK, this analysis has found significant difference in attempts to formally control narrative by senior managers. It is asserted that this finding is itself fundamental to understanding difference and addressing the main research question about the discursive framing of public service reform. In Scotland the evidence has shown that there is less attempt to deliberately harmonise and frame discourse within a single construction. This is supported by the earlier evidence of meso and micro level data converging with UK narratives about globalisation. In turn, this finding then addresses the subsidiary research question about a distinct Scottish ideology from the UK, with evidence to support a looser ideological approach to reform, compared with the UK data.

6.8.3 Ambiguity and Presentation

Alongside directly contradictory narratives, a softer form of ambiguity was at work in the interviews, whereby there was the use of an arguably misleading selective depiction of certain issues to promote a specific view. For example:

...there's about kind of 50 people across the organisation that we would term corporate leaders. And we meet regularly as a group so I think we're much more together if you like and we talk about things together... (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

In practical terms, it isn't possible that as many as 50 people can easily meet as a group and hold joint discussions. However, this phrasing suggests that the group are getting together to "talk" and creates the impression of a close management team informally jointly dealing with issues when they "meet regularly". In this way the narrative is framing the explicit discussion to direct thought and understanding and create a story and comprehension that favours the organisation. Generally, this type of facework was used by interviewees from both organisations.

This framing of discourse to construct understanding is also evident in the use of euphemisms. Euphemisms are a discursive device to effectively re-label unpleasant or negative words to neutralise them or present them in a positive light. Taken to an extreme they can become the doublespeak or oxymoronic words or phrases discussed earlier in this chapter.

Euphemisms can be particularly helpful during periods of reform, as they can be used to try and construct positive understandings of contentious or disputed changes.

Within the case study organisations, the specific use of euphemisms were more evident in Scottish Enterprise. For example the interviewees used the words 'overplan' and 'in-year planning' for 'overspending'. Baker (2006) terms this 'framing by labelling' – the use of a generic term to direct

thinking and understanding on a subject. One Scottish Enterprise interviewee appeared particularly predisposed to use euphemisms, for example using the phrase “our highest need for change areas” to refer to the topics where staff expressed the most discontent. Euphemism as a discursive device (Rahimi and Sahragardan, 2006) can be used as a way of implicitly denying that there is a problem by attempting to neuter the negative connotation. This appears the most likely conscious act in this case, since this particular interviewee tended to combine the euphemisms with explicit denials. For example, when asked about weaknesses reported in the staff survey, the same person went onto state:

Staff were telling us not that they were bad, all the results were good, but that was one of our lowest scoring areas... (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

It is difficult to definitively relate the apparent predisposition of Scottish Enterprise interviewees to use euphemisms, to the research questions. This could be an organisational culture that has developed around the common use of this style of speaking within a small management team, rather than anything related to the position within the devolution settlement. Certainly, an enhanced use of euphemisms could not be identified in any of the Scottish public documents analysed. However, it is clear that this pattern was only significantly present in the Scottish Enterprise micro- discourse, suggesting that if this dominance of euphemisms is in any way a sign of Scottish distinctiveness, it appears to be at the micro-level level only and not present in more formal narratives.

6.8.4 Experience of Leading Public Sector Reform

The previous sections discussed the common story-line whereby interviewees portrayed themselves as a hero. This section examines this common narrative in more detail and identifies how it can sometimes be in conflict with alternative narratives from other interviewees or documents. There is a greater discussion and analysis of how a senior leader appears to portray themselves as the hero of a story, and how and why this is done.

As previously outlined, aspects of the data collected suggested an implicit discomfort amongst some of the leaders with the changes that they were personally responsible for driving forward. One way of giving their role positive and more palatable meaning, was to cast themselves as heroes either within the meta-narrative or at certain story-arcs in the narrative. In this way the research uncovered some evidence of the human collateral of public sector reform.

It is easy for a researcher to fall into a judgemental view of the leaders' tendency to portray themselves as heroes. There is a sub-textual assumption behind the researcher's critical identification of the hero narrative, that the manager's narrative is falsely constructed to justify negative changes. This underlying view hints that the researcher's own construction of the leader is that they fill the role of villain in public sector reform. However, the understanding of the hero construction as a coping mechanism for the leader, who themselves is being potentially damaged and exploited by the reform, problematises and destabilises the research's

personally critical subtext. As outlined in Chapter Two, Frost (1999, cited in Gherardi, 2004)) highlights the importance of compassion by the researcher for the research subjects, in order to enhance understanding.

From this perspective, the leaders are human subjects caught in a power structure that exerts particular pressures and constraints on them.

Foucault (1994) acknowledges that power flows in multi-directions. This means that within any single organisation, even those at the very top of the hierarchy are not merely controlling others, but are themselves subject to other power and control mechanisms. However, in the analysis of the research findings, Foucault's broad approach to power did not appear to fully explain the data, and the work of Bourdieu was subsequently also used as a frame of analysis.

Bourdieu can be read as having some similar concerns to Foucault, in particular with regard to power and its creation and maintenance. He also sees language as related to and a tool for power and control. However, Foucault's very broad understanding of the ubiquitous nature of power is somewhat modified by Bourdieu (1984), who depicts power as more site specific. He argued that individuals have unconscious personal strategies which they adapt depending on their social environment. This theory is explained using the concepts of habitus and field. Bourdieu uses the concept of 'habitus' to refer to deeply embedded learned cultural and social norms that funnel and guide thoughts and behaviour. These norms or 'habitus' are understood as being physically embodied within individuals and not functioning only through language. Habitus exist within what Bourdieu terms 'fields'. Bourdieu refers to 'fields' as specific areas of

socially structured practice, for example the 'Juridicial Field' (Bourdieu, 1987). These fields are the arenas where people express themselves and compete for power and social capital. The social element is of particular relevance to Bourdieu's analysis: he rejects notions of power struggle being purely economically based and highlights for example, competition around cultural and political capital. The same people can experience and reproduce power differently in different fields, depending on their comparative position in the specific field, and it is this relative position in each field that will determine the language that the individual uses. The individual's identity and relative social position in the field is represented and reproduced through the language that they use.

Using Bourdieu's lens in the context of this research, it is possible to understand the use of the hero narrative by the leaders interviewed as a field specific device to reconcile personal feelings with the organisation's habitus and its specific structure, function and place. The perspective that habitus engagement is unconscious through being deeply physically engrained may provide some insight into how some interviewees appeared to not perceive their narrative as potentially co-existing with alternative narratives.

When directly asked, most of the interviewees did not try and hide that they did not personally agree with all the changes that they implemented:

I think that if it's something that you don't agree with then... I think there's a difference if it's something that you really believe in. You might go the extra mile or even further and look at how you might

want to influence that change or make it better ... I think if decisions are taken that you feel – if you set out your case and you're overruled, the decisions taken elsewhere... I think you're more likely to go 'OK fine but on your head be it'... if it's your change you're more likely to be... three steps ahead thinking - well if this happens [I'll have a plan in place] whereas I think if it's being done to you, you're more likely to be [thinking] 'OK that's your responsibility to work all that out not mine'. I think there's that difference... I think it's about owning the change isn't it? You're thinking in terms of yourself and the organisation and yourself and if it's something being done to you you're more likely to do what's required but it's not yours to own. (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

These type of feelings of ambivalence co-existed with the previously discussed common assertion of the individual's own role in transformative changes for the organisation. For example:

...if you go back to 2007/2008 when obviously there were big changes in terms of the review of the Enterprise Networks, I was part of the change management team that was put in place to do that, we did it all in-house actually. So I was part of that project team and obviously at that point I was responsible for the communications side of it as well... So that's the decision we took and it kind of worked for us because...- I mean in the past – I've been with the organisation 11 years – and in the past when we've been through change there has been quite a lot of media speculation and that didn't happen back in 2007/2008 and I think

that that made it easier and I think it made it easier for staff.

(Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

This is also sometimes expressed as an apparent appeal to the individual's own experience and authenticity:

I lived through the times (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

Individuals situated themselves as key to organisational competence in various ways. One interviewee provided heavy detail on what happened in a particular set of circumstance and their own role in this, sometimes constantly referring to their own time in the organisation (at one point 5 times in 4 consecutive sentences) and sometimes through judicious use of 'we' and 'I'. This use of pronouns enables a framing of the decision taken by the group to be entirely aligned with the individual's personal view. In this way the group success can apparently be attributed to the individual. For example:

That's one of the reasons we also picked it and I picked it...

(Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

Statements were also made as claims to importance, seniority and knowledge. For example one of the first statements made by an interviewee was:

I used to be the [area remit] Director. Someone else is the [area remit] Director now and I'm their boss... [Scottish Enterprise interviewee].

This narrative use provides evidence of a 'narrative within a narrative', as the interview narrates their own story (rather than the organisation's story) as one of a heroic march of progress. It is worth noting at this point, that whilst CICA interviewees also appeared keen to tell a story of themselves as the hero of public sector reform, it is the Scottish Enterprise interview texts that particularly stand out in this regard. This apparently stronger need to assert one's own importance *may* be connected to a lower confidence and status within the political hegemony, as also indicted by the content of the meta and meso level texts.

6.8.4.1 Experience of Leading Public Sector

Reform and Plot Inconsistencies

A difficulty with the portrayal of self as hero in these narratives is that plot inconsistencies arise when the hero then tries to distance themselves from problems that arise. When problems arise the self-identified hero sometimes provided claims that they did not have a part in the problem or that they were only following instructions. For example:

And if you go back to 2007/2008 when obviously there were big changes in terms of the review of the Enterprise Networks, I was part of the change management team that was put in place to do that... (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

...it got to around January and we were overspending hugely and at that point in time in terms of the information and everything, I remember getting a call from The Scotsman [newspaper] saying 'someone said I understand that you've got no money'. And I was like 'what?!' I remember speaking to the Finance [Director] and he said its rubbish we're not going to turn the lights off, we've got reserves for anything like that. I can't remember the line but he said it would be absolutely fine – blahdy blah blah. Of course I then relayed that line to the media, to key politicians this kind of thing but actually it wasn't... (Same Scottish Enterprise interviewee as quote above).

In the example above, the interviewee did not appear to recognise the plot inconsistency in the story they were telling. In this example, the reason for failure is ambiguously located somewhere else, which is out of the hero's (self) control. There is a sub-textual assertion that what was happening was wrong, but nothing to do with the interviewee, even though they have also said that they were part of the management team in control.

The interviewees often appeared to be wrestling with both owning organisational reform failure and the rejection of their role in it. Indeed, whilst opponents of reform were often identified as villains, when *they themselves* resisted reform, this was presented as the right thing to do. Chapter Two explored Llewellyn's (2001) work into resistance to change as a way of understanding why some reform initiatives have failed. He identifies the re-emergence of 'old' practices within a new narrative that

stems from local resistance. This was particularly evidenced in one senior leader's account of change:

...they also at that point bought in a group of consultants...they wanted what they called their Team Huddle...

Q. Did the new ways of working you'd done with the consultants continue after they'd left? Or did those things just end? So for example, the Team Huddle – did you still do that after they'd gone?

A. ...I had weekly meetings anyway with the team so I went back to my weekly meeting...

Q. Was there anything that you learnt during the time [the consultants] were with you that you used after they'd left? Or do you feel that most of it was...[not used]?

A. No I don't think I used any of it to be honest.

Q. Do you think [the consultants] thought you were obstructive?

A. Yeah (CICA interviewee).

In this example, the leader shows self-awareness of their own actions as obstructive, but as part of the wider narrative, this is justified by their construction of the consultant's incompetence and lack of understanding. The earlier discussing of dissenters (Kassing, 2011) and the finding that the senior managers did not recognise the value of staff dissent is here overturned. The senior managers recognised staff dissent as valid, *when they themselves were the dissenters*. In this particular example, the story told by the interviewee is that their dissent prevented time and resource being wasted on a daily 'team huddle'.

In terms of the research questions, the most significant finding is that there was no discernible difference at a micro-level between how senior managers in both organisations told complex stories, where they were the hero *and* not responsible for organisational failure. Similarly, CICA and Scottish Enterprise interviewees criticised reform dissenters *and* justified their own reasons for dissent. There was a slight difference in the strength of the hero narrative in the conflicting stories told by Scottish Enterprise, and this may suggest that although this type of plot inconsistency is common to both organisations, Scottish Enterprise's subordinate position in the governmental hierarchy, makes their staff more predisposed to claims of authority and competence to compensate for this.

6.8.5 Failed Narratives

This type of contradiction within a single person's narrative may be due to internal resistance to the dominant organisational narrative. Related to the notion of resisted narratives is the more overt 'failed' narratives. Chapter Two of this thesis outlined Gabriel's (2004) view that whilst organisations have narratives of great achievements, they also have stories that exist outside the managed terrain of the organisation and which challenge the official order. Gabriel argues that narratives that attempt to instil morality without sensitivity will fail to engage staff, and despite their dominant position, still 'fail' to be accepted. On a similar note, Sims (2004) also surmises that people will only feel passionately if they see their own story and that of the organisation intertwined. Gabriel (2000) found extensive evidence of emotion and sensitivity in narratives used by a broad range of interviewees in organisational interviews.

The prevalence of emotionality in other organisational research contrasts starkly with the data gathered for this thesis, where the evidence suggests an overall absence of sensitivity and emotionality, with the exception of one interviewee who spoke of humiliation and personal sadness in an organisational reform project. However, the focus of this research differs from that of Gabriel (2000), by having a sole focus with the meta-narrative of the organisation: the narratives contained in public accounts and interviews with the organisation's senior leaders. Gabriel studied a broader range of staff within the organisations' hierarchical structure. This disparity may therefore suggest that emotionality in organisations is more readily employed, constructed and utilised by those with lower status in the organisation. Consequentially it may be the case though, that this emotional deficit in the narratives of senior leaders may stymie the effectiveness of their narratives in achieving the engagement of other staff.

There is evidence in this research to support the hypothesis that an emotional narrative shortcoming has damaged the successful wider absorption of the narrative. The pervasiveness of plot inconsistencies that has been revealed in this chapter, suggests that the organisations' grand narratives have partially failed in some respects. These plot inconsistencies provide evidence that reforms are being driven in a way that people (including managers) do not necessarily identify with or cannot see a way of developing a personal sense of meaning from. For example, CICA reform narratives may be undermined by the use of UK discursive devices that are proving ineffectual or insensitive in a Scottish context.

Conversely, there is evidence to refute a hypothesis that emotionality in organisations is more readily employed, constructed and utilised by those with lower status in the organisation. If emotion exists anywhere in any other data analysed, it is in the *Open Public Services* White Paper, which the previous Chapter identified as having a heat and urgency lacking elsewhere in the texts examined. This greater emotionality appears in the meta –narrative of the hegemonically superior UK Government, disproving its automatic association with those of lower status.

Perhaps the real value of this finding is an understanding by the author/s of *Open Public Services* that emotion leads to engagement and audience connection. If Sims (2004) is correct and people will only feel passionately if they see their own story intertwined with the narrative presented, then *Open Public Services* will have a greater impact and reach due to its emotionality. It is therefore disappointing that the *Open Public Services* narrative could largely not be traced in the UK meso and micro discourses, providing no evidence that Sims assertion is correct. This complexity of finding and lack of evidence for the *impact* of emotionality further suggests a lack of distinctiveness in the micro-narratives of the UK and Scottish organisations.

6.8.6 'Just between you and I': An Apparent Wish to Confide in the Interviewer

The final type of inconsistency identified during the interviews was the personally surprising frequent efforts by interviewees to explicitly include the interviewer in the discussion and give the interviewer the impression

that they were being confided in by the interviewee. This behaviour manifested itself in many ways including being passed significant 'off-the record' information (that unfortunately could not be used in this thesis), asking what the interviewer's own view was on various subjects and making reference to the interviewer's own knowledge and experience in a flattering way. This happened in both organisations so did not appear to be linked to my existing personal relationships in CICA, or be rooted in any kind of cultural or narrative difference between the UK and Scottish Governments.

The use of 'confidences' in the framing of the interview by the interviewee may be for many different reasons. There may be a professional wish to promote rapport with the interviewer, as they would with any business contact. There may be a more general wish to be liked by the interviewer and see flattery as a way of helping to achieve this, or there may be a desire to ensure that the interviewer presents a flattering picture of the interviewee, and sees an explicit temporary 'friendship' as a way of promoting this through flattery of the interviewer and the impression that confidences and private information are being exchanged. For example, one interviewee made an explicit reference to my own role as civil servant and appeared to use this to build consensus between us, possibly through flattery:

...that kind of approach, which I'm sure you might recognise...We would tend to take our lead from the Scottish civil service so you'll probably know better than me (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

These exchanges may provide some evidence of Housley and Fitzgerald's (2001) structures of narrative building in interviews that were discussed in Chapter Two. Housley and Fitzgerald examined the use of narrative in radio interviews related to devolution. They identified a conscious use of 'extended turn types' and 'request formats' by interviewees to allow them to portray the narrative they wished to convey. From this perspective, interviews provide an ideal structure to allow an interviewee to exploit the fundamental conventions underlying the interview format to provide the story that they want to tell through an apparent conversation.

The use of flattery, consensus building, checking the interviewer's perspective and attempts to build confidentiality as in the experience of this thesis' interviews, would assist the interviewee in this exploitation of the interview format to tell their story.

6.8.7 Summary of Inconsistencies and Ambiguities

This section has used an examination of inconsistency and ambiguity in these interviews to assist to address the chapter's focus on the main research question 'How is public service reform discursively framed in Scotland and what are its underlying themes?' and the subsidiary research questions 'What are the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland and how do they diverge from UK narratives of public service reform?', and 'Do Scottish and UK public sector staff interpret generic text differently, and if so, why?' The evidence gathered has again fundamentally destabilised and problematised these research questions by finding overwhelming consistency between the case study

organisations in how they construct and utilise plot inconsistencies. These 'consistencies in inconsistency' were around issues of the reasons for change, understandings of the role of staff in reform, key plot inconsistencies, a contradictory framing of reform and their role in it, and partial attempts to 'befriend' the interviewer. Whilst there was a stronger contradictory contrast in the Scottish Enterprise interviews due to a more significant portrayal of self as hero, the key narrative of self as organisational leader- hero *and* not responsible for organisational failure was similar in the CICA micro-discourse.

With limited exceptions, the findings therefore suggest a similarity of narrative inconsistency and its utilisation in the Scottish and UK case-studies. This finding is more difficult to interpret through a Foucauldian lens, when it might be expected that stronger distinctiveness would arise due to the hegemonical differences between the organisations. When discussing the interviewees' experience of leading public sector reform, the Foucauldian analysis was supplemented by a Bourdieu influenced consideration of habitus and field. Whilst we may consider that CICA and Scottish Enterprise are located in very different specific sites of 'habitus', it could be that when their managers are speaking about and leading public sector reform, that they are in very similar 'fields'. In this way, the narrative similarity is understood to be due to the similarity in field. The senior managers' competition for capital reproduces itself in common ways only loosely connected to the organisation's habitus. This assertion begins to build understanding as to why narrative similarity has commonly arisen between the organisations' at a micro-level and why the micro-level analysis has struggled to find difference between the senior leaders that

can inform the understanding of difference inherent in the research questions.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has identified a number of recurring narratives and ambiguities arising in the interviewees stories that are common to both case-studies, including financial constraints as a cause for change; 'heroes & villains', who are respectively working to create change and derail it; the language of the private sector or new managerialism and a 'march of progress'. These specific emerging parallels in how the interviewees talked about their organisational change suggests senior managers in both organisations and governments have some shared views and understanding about key issues.

The chapter set out to examine the main research question 'How is public service reform discursively framed in Scotland and what are its underlying themes?' and the subsidiary research questions 'What are the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland and how do they diverge from UK narratives of public service reform?' and 'Do Scottish and UK public sector staff interpret generic text differently, and if so, why?' The key finding running through this chapter was that there was rarely a discernible difference in how UK and Scottish senior leaders talked about reform and organisational change, and in both organisations, there was extremely limited evidence that the interviewees were aware of broader reform messages and were trying to translate them in their discussions.

Chapter One of the thesis discussed evidence of a distinctive Scottish discourse, such as around constructions of a 'New' Scotland. Whilst this cannot be completely refuted, the identification of common narratives between the case studies problematises the earlier key assumption that there *is* a difference in how public service reform is discursively framed in Scotland and the UK. These findings challenge the foundation of difference and suggest that there is some degree of similarity in how reform is understood and translated in these organisations.

Chapter Two of the thesis outlined the argument that there is an essentially limited number of core narrative structures or plots that reappear frequently in stories told in organisations. It was asserted that this is especially the case in narratives relating more specifically to stories of modernisation. Store (1989, cited in Fischer, 2003) uses typologies of decline/ crisis and human helplessness/need for control, whilst Llewellyn (2001) identified the most common modernisation story as being one of the imagery of the lost citizen, the citizen's quest and the final triumph. In this narrative the customer is locked in battle with the unresponsive public service provider, achieving the service they deserve through modernisation. Although there were traces of plots similar to those Llewellyn identified in the case studies examined in this thesis, they were not the most common narratives identified. More frequently, the interviews and texts used in this data-analysis revealed more widely used stories and plots, that utilised more generic features of easily recognised plots not confined to organisational stories, such as the 'triumphant hero', whereby

the subject situated their own role as hero in bringing the organisation to a happy-ending.

Reflecting more generally on the narrative findings from both this chapter and the previous chapter, and the differing interpretations of the definition of narrative outlined in Chapter Two, it is clear that many of the themes can only be identified as narratives, if a very loose definition of narrative is used that is akin to 'language'. With the possible exception of the march of progress narrative, all these themes lacked a clear structure or plot progression that would allow the discourse to be easily identified as a story.

There are clear *aspects* of stories in these identified themes, including the use of characters such as heroes and villains. However, the specific aspects of narrative story-telling outlined in Chapter Two are absent from these texts and the use of narrative linguistic devices in the work of those such as Llewellyn and Store could not be generally found in the discourse of these case-studies. Store's decline/ crisis typology could potentially be identified in the imperative for portraying self as hero, but this in itself is stretching the interpretation to some degree. For this reason, whilst the use of a general approach to narrative analysis has revealed some layers of understanding in this research, it must be stressed that not all the language analysis can be said to align with a narrative approach and much of the understanding gleaned could also have been gathered using a more traditional discourse analysis approach.

It is perhaps in the examination of ambiguity and plot inconsistencies where the patterns of contradiction and framing appear to lend themselves more readily to a narrative understanding, as the reasons for the contradictions and framing can be attributed to an apparent desire to maintain a dominant narrative. However, even these narratives continue to be incomplete in a traditional sense – they are sometimes lacking 'essential' features of story-telling such as a clearly identifiable beginning or end, although there was still evidence of a conscious manipulation of history and audience to tell a story, inadvertently leading to inconsistencies and plot holes

The recognition of the discursive devices that can result in these plot inconsistencies is important for this thesis because these devices are what the case study organisations utilize to push forward unpopular changes as part of the public sector reform agenda. That managers from both organisations used a similarity of discursive device suggest that in Bourdieu's terms, the field is more important than the habitus and the competition for power in the field overrides most significance of habitus. Competent use of discursive devices can help senior staff to obfuscate or distract staff from the big picture. However, the leaks and holes in the story betray glimpses of alternative stories, potentially belonging to the senior leaders themselves, as they work to make personal sense of the changes for which they have responsibility.

Both organisations utilised similar discursive techniques, potentially suggesting that the devices that are broadly used in 'change management'

systems are similar in their basis and imported from business models. Such an approach would align with the public sector's fascination with private sector techniques and the type of increasing managerialism outlined in Chapter One. However, it may be that these types of devices are not fully appropriate for the public sector, as this research provides some evidence that this standardised approach has had some difficult impacts on senior leaders, resulting in fragmented and inconsistent narratives. Over and above this, there were some key unexpected findings around the potential toll on senior leaders of the experience of being agents driving change. This encourages the researcher to self-reflect on the temptation to dehumanize senior public servants and construct them analytically as villains.

The use of micro-level narrative analysis in this chapter has provided considerable depth to the existing understanding of public sector difference between Scotland and the rest of the UK. It has highlighted that within specific case-study organisations, all managers have a tendency to work narratives in similar ways, continuing to consistently challenge claims to fundamental difference.

The final analytical chapter will now build on the findings of the last three chapters and examine power and marginalisation in public sector roles to make sense of the discursive devices that are used in the framing of public and private narratives. Throughout the thesis there has been a Foucauldian influence on power as a driver for discourse. This understanding of the importance of power in why and how communication and narrative occurs is at the forefront of the following chapter and

provides a framework for understanding the messy and complex findings of this thesis.

CHAPTER 7

POWER AND MARGINALISATION IN PUBLIC SECTOR ROLES

7.1 Introduction

The last three chapters examined narratives at work in government meta-narratives, organisational meso-narratives, and individual micro-narratives, using UK and Scottish case studies to search for the way narratives may be operationalised differently in the different administrations. The findings reveal a messy and inconsistent picture: there are more commonalities between the case studies than variances at the micro-level, and the differences between the layers of narrative indicate a weak relationship between discourse at higher and lower levels. This final analytical chapter re-examines these findings to further explore reasons behind the way in which the narratives are used. Flowing from the previous identification of ambiguity and inconsistency in the findings, there is a focus on the idea of 'hidden' narratives in the discourse, including the notion of 'absences' in the story-telling. In particular, this chapter considers the possibility that there may have been reluctance on the part of some interviewees to tell the researcher aspects of their stories, and an overtly expressed desire to keep certain 'facts' secret from other staff. The potential existence of hidden narratives could be identified in the texts when, for example, there were unexplained gaps in the narratives, obfuscation by interviewees in their responses to questions asked and themes raised, and in explicit 'confessions' by interviewees themselves of attempts to 'hide' aspects of their communications. It is postulated that these narrative manipulations

and discourse use are driven by power, control and marginalisation in the organisations, and the contested devolved settlement in which their governments are operating.

This chapter aims to again address the main research question about discursive framing and also the related subsidiary research question about Scottish ideology. In the previous analytical chapters these research questions were problematised, as the fundamental assumption underpinning the questions – that within the differing political landscape there is variation in how public service reform is understood and communicated in the UK and Scotland – was found to be consistently challenged by the evidence. This challenge was based on large similarities in micro discourses between the UK and Scotland, coupled with a very limited coherence between macro, meso and micro narratives within each country. This chapter's focus on hidden and absent narratives also revealed striking similarities at the between the case study organisations and how senior leaders publicly and privately told stories about reform in interviews and published text. However, there were also some distinctive differences between the organisations, that may be linked to their relative positions of power.

This chapter will explicitly engage with the Foucauldian perspective, whilst at the same time building on the work of discourse analysts (Wood and Kroger, 2000; Baker, 2006) and theorists considering the use of organisational narratives (Gabriel, 1995, 1999, 2000; Sims, 2004) to find that the use of narrative analysis in considering devolution is significantly enhancing the understanding of that established by the existing political

science dominated public policy approach (Parry, 2002; Keating, 2005) to policy analysis in Scotland.

7.2 Hidden Narratives

The previous three chapters focused on the identification and discussion of narratives that were explicitly presented to the interviewer or other audiences. The last chapter also highlighted the prevalence of 'failed' narratives (Gabriel, 2004), drawing attention to the possibility that within every organisation there are a multiplicity of stories that could be told, and that these stories might serve different strategic purposes within the organisation or to fulfil particular agendas. This chapter will focus on the stories that are not explicitly told but that were evident in the interviews and across the documents examined. Building on the previous consideration of failed narratives, this chapter considers why these narratives are hidden, and to whose benefit. There will be a reflection on whether these hidden narratives are deliberately suppressed or whether they naturally and unconsciously fall away from being overtly re-told and expressed. In both these cases, whether the narratives are deliberately or unconsciously hidden, there is an examination of why this may have occurred.

7.2.1 Hidden Devolution Narratives in Discourse

Before commencing these considerations it is necessary to identify some specific hidden narratives in the case study organisations to use in these reflections. Chapter One discussed the key differences between the case

study organisations, both in terms of their varying functions, but more importantly in terms of their relative positions of dominance and subordination within the hegemonic structure of UK Government. These organisational differences may help to unlock the reasons for some of the differing hidden narratives between the organisations.

For example within CICA, it was established in the previous chapter that devolution narratives were largely absent in the discursive text gathered during the research. This is, in part, illuminated by the explicit engagement with devolution narratives in Scottish Enterprise. This is an important omission within CICA as they are ostensibly working for three different governments, of whom two (Scotland and Wales) are devolved administrations.

In terms of the main research question about discursive framing of public service reform, this finding suggests that rather than the Scottish Government choosing to carve a distinctive framing of reform, this discourse will itself be shaped partly outwith the control of the government and subject to the power relationships between Scotland and the UK as reflected in the devolution settlement. Following on from this perspective of how reform is becoming framed in Scotland, the related subsidiary research question 'What are the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland and how do they diverge from UK narratives of public service reform?' can be partly addressed by considering these power differentials as drivers of divergence between the UK and Scottish administrations.

CICA's absent discourse about devolution and politics contrasted significantly with Scottish Enterprise, where interviewees quickly and easily drew on references to politics and government. For example the following interview extract was a response to a question about the interviewee's job title, to which they were unprompted regarding political or devolution related considerations:

...I spent a large part of my career pre devolution and a large part of my career post devolution...devolution has made a huge difference, an absolute fundamental difference to what we do...

Q...how has it made a difference?

A. ...virtually every aspect of the business...Fundamentally changed the relationship between our organisation as a quango...fundamentally changed the relationship between government; and fundamentally changed the relationship with the political system, and that's the political system broadly defined, that's the parliament, MSPs and all the people that engage with Parliament and MSPs...We were a relatively small issue in the context of Whitehall, but a big issue in the context of Holyrood. And...reflecting the significance of economic development and economic growth as an issue for the Scottish Parliament, or business and economic growth. So that has been a big front of mind issue for the Scottish Parliament and by definition the two Scottish governments we've had. Both of the governments that have come in since devolution have both said that economic development is at the forefront of what they're trying to do and that also has put us in

the shop window and at the forefront of what occurs. (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

The ease with which this interviewee readily employed narratives about devolution, suggests that they are regularly discussing and thinking about Scottish politics and devolution. The prevalence of this narrative when contrasted with its absence in CICA, suggests that it may be Scottish Enterprise's specific site as "a relatively small issue in the context of Whitehall, but a big issue in the context of Holyrood" that is drawing out and constructing this narrative of reform.

Any similarity of narrative in CICA, was both explicitly absent and potentially suppressed by interviewees when directly referred to by the interviewer. During one interview the following exchange was held:

Q. Were you getting any pressure for change from actual Government or Ministers rather than parliament?

A. Not that I'm aware of.

Q. Were you getting any signals from the UK or Scottish Government about what they thought CICA should be doing differently?

A. At that time I wouldn't have been party to anything like that...

(CICA interviewee).

This senior CICA leader, with a key function subject to modernising reforms, usually gave reasonably long answers unprompted. Their answer to "Were you getting any pressure for change from actual Government or

Ministers rather than parliament?" was the shortest in the whole interview.

Similarly, an exchange with another CICA interviewee was:

Q. I'm interested in the differences between UK and Scottish Governments. Do you feel you get different or similar messages from the different governments? Is there any difference in your relationship with the different governments?

A. There isn't really [any difference] because the key messages about the Scheme have to come from the UK government because that's where the primary legislation is and that's where the bulk of what we pay out from the Scheme comes. (CICA interviewee).

This answer was that interviewee's second shortest answer in the whole interview. Another CICA interviewee exchange was:

Q. Are you coming into contact with messages from the UK government or the Scottish government about the changes you're working on?

A. Probably not...maybe I need to get my networking and broaden my horizons. (CICA interviewee).

This response was also that interviewee's second shortest answer to any question asked. The equivalent exchange with the final CICA interviewee was:

Q. Do you feel that the big messages that you get from the Ministry of Justice and the Scottish Government are consistent? Do you

prioritise messages from the Ministry of Justice because they are your main sponsor?

A. At the moment both governments are saying exactly the same thing: that there is a squeeze on funding. I wouldn't say that we gave, on an operational basis, more priority to the Ministry of Justice...CICA provide a service across the whole of GB, Ministry of Justice fund the service we provide in England and Wales and the Scottish Government fund the service we provide in Scotland. We have an equal responsibility to provide a good service to both administrations. (CICA interviewee).

Taken across the four CICA interviews this appears to show a consistent hidden narrative of devolution. All of this case study's interviews lacked any explicit reference to the political reality of working in the public sector for government, and all of the interviewees appeared to suggest that they did not come into contact with different messages from the different governments.

It is important to consider whether this is due to an 'honest' lack of understanding, an irrelevance to the interviewee's work and experience, or a deliberate 'hiding' of a devolution narrative. Based on the data considered for the CICA case study, it is suggested that there was a deliberate hiding of the narrative. Firstly, most of the interviewees gave questions on this subject some of their shortest answers, indicating a discomfort with the subject and a wish to quickly move on. Secondly, as stated previously, CICA interviewees were more likely than Scottish Enterprise interviewees to amend and sometimes substantively change

their interview responses when asked by the researcher to approve the final transcripts. This area was one where most of the CICA interviewees deleted and changed their original responses.

Returning to the starting point of this section, and the fundamental differences between CICA and Scottish Enterprise, provides some illumination into why the devolution narrative was hidden in CICA but explicit in Scottish Enterprise. Scottish Enterprise is fully devolved to the Scottish Government. In this way they are able to openly position themselves within the devolution construct and would more understandably overtly express this position within their narratives. CICA on the other hand are reporting directly to the UK Government. As one interviewee said:

...we are part of the MoJ [UK Ministry of Justice) family, therefore we operate to MoJ rules. (CICA interviewee).

However, CICA also work for the two devolved administrations of Scotland and Wales. The suppression of any narrative about this position avoids any difficult issues regarding conflict between the politically different administrations and the expression of any problems in serving governments with essentially different views.

This approach also allows CICA to implicitly align itself with their UK department. Derrida uses the notion of 'hidden oppositions' (quoted in Wooffitt, 2005) which are categories on which dominant perspectives rely. In this example, the dominant UK Government position is partly sustained

through the hidden opposition of devolution. This hidden opposition is important in framing public service reform in Scotland in an organisation like CICA, where narratives about their location within Scotland and serving a Scottish Government are absent from their discourse. There is an inherent imbalance in the power held by the Scottish and UK Governments, based on the powers of their respective Parliaments. The Scotland Act 1998 established the Scottish Parliament as a subordinate Parliament in two ways: by stipulating a wide range of powers that the Scottish Parliament is unable to exercise power over or legislate for; and by confirming absolute UK Parliamentary sovereignty over all issues, including those devolved to the Scottish Parliament. In effect, the UK Government can overturn any legislation enacted by the Scottish Government at any time. This legislative settlement fundamentally undermines the integrity of devolution as a form of governance, not necessarily because the dominant power is deliberately and consciously suppressing the subordinate administration, but because this power imbalance is built into the devolution settlement.

7.2.2 General Hidden Narratives in Discourse

These implicit hidden oppositions were evident elsewhere. For example:

“We're also looking to adopt a much cleaner relationship between ourselves and applicants...the award will not include any amount to cover the cost of paid representation. However, claimants often choose to have such representation, with the cost being met from the amount of compensation they receive. Paid representatives will

normally require that their client sign a mandate authorising payment of their award to the representative. This means that the representative will be able to deduct their fees from the award before paying the remainder to the applicant. This has led to claimants attempting to bring CICA into disputes with their representative, it also increases the risk that CICA will miss an instruction from an applicant to pay the award directly to them. CICA intends that, in future, it will pay the award only to the applicant. (CICA interviewee).

In this example, the interviewee refers to adopting a “cleaner relationship” with the applicant, by not having any contact with the applicants paid representative or solicitor. This contrasts with the hidden opposition that a relationship with a solicitor is by implication somehow ‘dirty’. The interviewee goes on to explain why CICA is making this change – because it avoids the organisation being brought into disputes and reduces the amount of errors they make. However, by framing this using the hidden opposition of dirtiness, it is implied that this change is being made for good, ‘clean’ reasons. As discursive devices, examples such as this can be useful in driving reform and controlling narratives. Aligning the change with positive connotations constructed through hidden oppositions can frame public sector reforms as imperative and rational. These devices can work to effectively control and dominate the spaces where reform is discussed, making opposition and challenge more difficult.

Where opposition and challenge has been suppressed, narratives outside the meta-discourse may exist as traces – largely hidden but implicit to the

meta-discourse. These 'untold stories' may be mentioned but not discussed or explained. For example:

I used to be responsible for that but I no longer am. (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

This untold story of the internal fight or mistake that led to the individual losing part of their responsibilities, hints at an alternative position or view without appearing to deliberately hide all trace of it. This allows the story-teller to 'leak' the hidden discourse into the story, hinting at a different plot, without deviating from the main narrative. In this way, the story-teller is assured of more personal control over the translation and re-telling.

Essentially, control of organisational and ideological narratives can produce the organisational reality (Mumby, 1987), effectively controlling the understanding of the people within the organisation (about what has happened, is happening and going to happen. The control of narrative is therefore as valuable a source of organisational capital as control over finance, the physical infrastructure or any other type of resource in the organisation.

7.2.3 Summary of Hidden Narratives

This section has identified hidden narratives at work in the discourse of senior managers in both case-study organisations. Discourses of devolution were hidden in the narratives of CICA interviewees, whilst being prevalent in the narratives of Scottish Enterprise interviewees. It is

asserted that this is due to embedded power differentials in the devolution settlement and the respective hegemonic positions of the organisations. However, this finding takes on further depth when contrasted with the previous chapter's finding that wider macro level *reform* discourses were not present at the meso or micro level in the case-studies themselves. This analytical finding was concluded as being indicative of the primacy of Bourdieu's (Lane, 2000) field rather than the organisation's habitus. It was asserted that senior managers across the case studies were expressing themselves and competing for power and social capital in similar ways that are only loosely connected to their specific habitus.

This straightforward assertion is made more sophisticated by the finding that with regard to narratives of devolution, there was a significant difference in discourse between the organisations and this narrative was hidden in CICA. This suggests that the primacy of habitus or field is itself specific to the subject or issue under consideration. On the sensitive issue of devolution, habitus takes primacy in the construction and suppression of narratives in the agencies. This finding is further strengthened by the evidence that hidden narratives unconnected to devolution again followed a common pattern in both organisations.

In terms of the research questions, these findings highlight the value of narrative analysis, to at the very least complement existing literature (Parry, 2002; Keating, 2005) which has a tendency to be dominated by a political science perspective. This analysis of hidden narratives has

revealed that despite the on-going divergence between macro level narratives of reform between the Scottish and UK Governments, at the micro-level, senior managers are marginalising (by hiding discourse) in similar ways. However when discussing the sensitive issue of devolution, Scottish Enterprise leaders privilege this discourse and employ narratives freely and unprompted. CICA leaders marginalise this discourse by hiding it. Such a detailed and insightful finding is absent from the prevailing literature.

7.3 Absences in the Story-telling

The last chapter discussed contradictions and narrative plot inconsistencies. More specific types of plot inconsistencies can sometimes be revealed through absences of narrative and story-telling on certain subjects. This can be seen in the earlier example where the hidden narrative of devolution is absent in CICA discourse.

Absences are an important feature of discourse and narrative literature and methodologies (Carabine, 2001; Baker, 2006). This is because absences marginalise the experience to which they relate, whilst at the same time privileging the dominant discourse or narrative which is explicitly communicated. This is expressed eloquently by Mumby and Stohl:

Discourse, as a structured social practice, creates meaning formations rooted in a system of presence and absence which

systematically privileges and marginalizes different organizational experiences. (Mumby & Stohl, 1991: 313).

This means that by identifying absences of narrative, power differentials can be clarified. For example, the absence of a devolution narrative in CICA indicates the limited power exerted over CICA by the devolved administrations compared with the UK Government.

Another example of absence in CICA was the lack of overt interviewee recognition of the parallel tracks of their organisational change with wider governmental reforms such as the responsibilisation of citizenship. Aside from the issue of budgetary constraints, compared to Scottish Enterprise interviewees, the CICA interviewees showed a limited understanding of the way in which specific organisational changes could clearly be identified as fitting within wider political change and narratives. In some ways, this mirrored the absence of devolution narratives. This may be attributed to their own lack of conscious understanding as existing within an ideological hegemony. That is, they are not aware that they are operating within a dominant ideology or that they are within a constructed and contested hegemony at all. Gramsci (2000) uses the notion of a cultural hegemony' as an explanation for the way which a dominant class is able to impose their own values and norms as everyone's 'common sense' reality, effectively suppressing understandings of alternative possibilities. From this perspective, the power structure and dominance of UK Government narratives are not natural and automatic, but developed and constructed to benefit the controlling group. This would align with the earlier finding

regarding the apparent lack of consciousness of any alternative ways of understanding the context in which staff were operating.

One CICA interviewee even went so far as to outline an IT related change that they found out after implementation had fitted perfectly with a Cabinet Office initiative:

...when we set out what we wanted to do around on-line communication and telephone communication, without knowing it, it completely accorded with the Cabinet Office guidance in what we were doing and what we were able to demonstrate is that we were on the same track... (CICA interviewee).

There were other examples given by CICA interviewees of responsibilisation without an apparent wider awareness, for example:

...we want to get the balance right between the role of the CICA and the role of the applicant in terms of providing the information needed to support a claim. At the moment CICA collects most of the medical evidence ...We think that we have the potential to save unnecessary cost and speed up the assessment process if we expect more the applicant to take a bigger role in providing supporting evidence. This will be quite a fundamental change for the applicant ... Some may say that people who are already victims shouldn't have to take the responsibility of sourcing evidence that might be complex or difficult for them to get. .. the other way of looking at this is... the applicant is better placed to source this, and

the result will be that their case can be finalised quicker. (CICA interviewee).

These examples fit squarely within contemporary UK public service reform responsibilisation initiatives which cut across a range of departments and services to variously work to move people off welfare benefits (Department of Work and Pensions, 2013), to take responsibility for their own sexual health (Beckmann, 2013) and to manage their own risk of being a victim of crime (Lee, 2011).

It is therefore important to consider why such a key underpinning narrative is absent from CICA discourse. This may be at least partly explained by the earlier chapters' discussion of the positioning of self as hero.

Discourses provide 'subject positions' which are:

...a part allocated to a person by the use of a story (Stenner, 1993 cited in Wooffit, 2005: 148).

These subject positions have their own vocabulary that is used to construct objects. By not mentioning that actions are a result of a wider narrative or an instruction from another part of government, the story-teller is able to use a narrative where they are more wholly responsible for the successful action taken. The CICA interviewee who found out that their communication changes entirely accorded with Cabinet Office guidance said that:

[it was] one of the things I was pleased about... it was reassuring to know that we were doing the things that were being presented as the way to do it. (CICA interviewee).

However this specific finding does problematise an earlier finding in the last chapter. If CICA senior leaders were consciously or unconsciously absorbing and translating narratives such as responsabilisation, why were they not showing a similar overt or covert awareness of the key public sector reform messages identified in *Open Public Services* or *The Way Ahead*?

One possible reason could be the relative success (or failure) of the narratives to be absorbed and translated by staff. It could be that narratives of responsabilisation have more effectively saturated consciousness than narratives of reform. However, the habitus/ field framework may also offer some explanation.

It has already been established that the managers were generally acting in the primacy of the field rather than in specific sites of habitus. In CICA and Scottish Enterprise the managers had similar power and capital concerns that were guiding their discourses and these took supremacy over particular contextual issues, with the exception being the sensitive issue of devolution. However, this section has now identified that particularly in CICA there was an absent explicit discourse of major themes of neo-liberal reform, combined with the presentation of neo-liberal reforms as created by the manager-hero themselves.

It is asserted that this is again due to the primacy of the field to these individuals. The gain in power and social capital is the main goal to these leaders and this is best served by a narrative of self as hero. The habitus that includes the UK Government's neo-liberal reforms is absent only in explicit discourse, not in implicit influence. However, it is important to the leaders that the narrative claims this reform as a personal goal and not externally imposed. This was also the case at the meso level: CICA's *The Way Ahead* presented the specific reforms demanded by the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Select Committee as the ideas of the senior managers.

7.4 Evidence of Reluctance to tell Interviewer Aspects of their Stories

Earlier in this chapter there was a discussion of whether hidden narratives or absent narratives are deliberately or unconsciously suppressed. The analysis and identification of this will always be subject to researcher judgement and some element of ambiguity. However within the narratives examined as part of this thesis, there were some apparent examples of deliberate evasion of certain narratives or elements of narrative. This was outlined earlier in relation to the hidden narrative of devolution in CICA discourse, along with the assumption that the short and contested answers given to questions on this subject were evidence of deliberate evasion. More broadly, this type of conscious evasion can be linked back to Chapter Six's discussion of Housley and Fitzgerald's (2001) notion of request formats and extended turn types to manipulate the interview format to direct a story.

This conversation management was handled in different ways. One way was to answer the question asked very shortly and then talk about something entirely different, for example:

Q: Do you still do the 'In-Touch' newsletter to stakeholders?

A: Yes we still do that, and today was our first meeting of the Policy and Equality Forum...[goes on to talk about this meeting instead]
(CICA interviewee).

Similarly, one interviewee responded to the question “And what are staff saying to you [in the staff survey]?” with a 372 word answer about how important and high quality the survey used was. Only 11 of these 372 words could be deemed relevant to the question and these were:

...our results were very good... we've really come out pretty well...
(Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

Alternatively, sometimes an interviewee chose not to answer the question at all and directly speak about something else entirely. This approach gives the impression that the conventional interview format is being adhered to, whilst allowing the interviewee the space to talk at length on the subject of their choice. This was especially prevalent with one interviewee who based most of their answers on a strong historic march of progress type narrative that rarely gave any information on current positions or projects. For example:

Q: What are the key reform projects coming up just now in Scottish Enterprise?

A: Let me take you through the process, I [will] take you through the changes that were done, because we're more at the end of that round of changes... [goes on to detail different stages of historic change in Scottish Enterprise without providing any information on current changes] (Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

In the quote detailed above, this was the third time that the interviewee had been asked variations on the same question in succession, specifically:

- Q. What are the key changes that are happening just now for Scottish Enterprise? Is there something that's in your head or on a piece of paper somewhere called 'Scottish Enterprise Changes'? Or is it more organic than that?
- Q. What does that mean for just now? Does Scottish Enterprise have an internal change programme, I don't know if you'd call it that? Or is the need for change so firmly embedded now that no-one needs to call it that, it's just a day-to-day thing?
- Q. What are the key reform projects coming up just now in Scottish Enterprise? (Questions by the researcher).

Although the interviewee provided a response to each set of questions they did not answer any of these questions and appeared to be deliberately evading the provision of any information on current changes.

This same pattern arose with other interviewees but in a far more subtle way, for example:

Q: I'm interested in hearing what the key changes are within your area of responsibility to implement.

A: Quite literally at the moment we're in the change to the working patterns in the customer service centre... (CICA interviewee).

This is an interesting example because ostensibly the interviewee has clearly answered the question and given a relevant example. However, their choice of answer reveals both absences and deliberate evasion. This interviewee had a large remit within CICA and was responsible for a significant number of technically and culturally difficult changes. To answer using this relatively tiny example of a change to a small number of staff working patterns sits very oddly, given the context of their role within the organisation. The interviewee's narrative was entirely silent on changes happening for the majority of staff and more fundamental changes within their responsibility.

There are a range of possibilities to explain why the interviewee chose to use this example. They may have temporarily forgotten about these other changes or seen them as not important at that precise moment, especially if, for example, directly before the interview, the interviewee was working on the issue of the working patterns for these staff. However, given the depth of issues at stake, it seems possible that this selected example was deliberate. Baker (2006) discusses the 'selective appropriation of material', which is when aspects of a narrative that don't conform to the overall

narrative that an individual wishes to promote are left out. In this example, the selection of a change to a small number of working patterns, allowed the story-teller to avoid revealing story-arcs of problems or change failure in other areas and allowed them to maintain a meta-narrative of success.

...translators and interpreters can and do resort to various strategies to strengthen or undermine particular aspects of the narratives they mediate, explicitly, or implicitly...many initiate their own translation projects and actively select texts and volunteer for interpreting tasks that contribute to the elaboration of particular narratives. Neither are they detached, unaccountable professionals...Consciously or otherwise, they translate texts and utterances that participate in creating, negotiating and contesting social reality. (Baker, 2006: 105).

In CICA there was a depiction of staff and Trade Unions as irrationally holding rational change back. An understanding and narrative of why staff and Trade Unions may have rationally opposed change to protect the position of their members was entirely absent:

Q. When you were talking about the changes to the working parameters for staff in the Contact Centre you used the word 'challenging'. In what way has that been challenging?

A....Elements of that are always the staff themselves and their Trade Unions...From a Trade Union perspective, I absolutely think that a shift of any flexibility was not met and has continued not to be met with the best views on their part. Probably at times, it feels like we've gone two steps forward and one step back. So the process feels as if

it's been lengthier than we would have liked it to. Also just in December when we really should have been in the final hurdle, the local PCS [Trade Union] group was set up in the Authority and it felt as if that took us right back to the beginning. So I think we've had to invest a huge amount of time to stop and say OK what are all the objectives here, what are the objections, and can we overcome them to get us back onto a track...But there then seems to be this whole 'look after the people' piece [holding us back]... (CICA interviewee).

This focus on the staff that are required to change highlights another absence in these narratives. There was very limited references or mentioning of the interviewees own group of senior management as requiring any change, with all references pointing to the previously identified villainous 'staff' or 'middle managers'.

In this way the senior managers were locating themselves as rational and normative, whilst the villainous staff opposing change were constructed as 'other', irrational and deviant. The discourses and discursive devices that the senior leaders employed were a key part of this work and served to assist the leaders in driving forward significant changes by justifying reforms and explaining their actions. This goes some way to beginning to understand the complexity and contradiction in the narratives about CICA staff discussed in the previous chapters. Rather than seeing the narrative as self-contradictory, this highlights that within the narrative there are 'good' staff (current senior manager team of heroes) and 'bad' staff (villainous others who oppose change for self-serving reasons). This reading of the narrative about CICA staff fits entirely with the *Open Public*

Services discourse – if it can be assumed that *Open Public Services* was talking about the non-normative 'bad' staff.

7.5 Expressed Desire to Keep Certain 'Facts' Secret from other Staff

The final type of absence identified in this research was explicitly described by the interviewees themselves, as what they chose to keep 'unsaid'. These were descriptions of narratives and language that the interviewees had consciously chosen to suppress from other parts of the organisation – usually the ambiguous 'other' staff. There is a limited but growing existing literature on secrecy in organisations, most recently being developed by Grey (2014) in relation to Bletchley Park, an organisation for which secrecy and confidentiality were deemed essential for national security.

More generally however, Costas and Grey (2014) theorise that in organisations, secrecy is a social process that can be understood in terms of identity and control. In terms of identity, the creation, keeping, sharing and excluding from secrets, creates social groups and cliques, building bonds and barriers between groups. The group/s who possess these privileged secrets then hold knowledge and power which enables them to better control the organisation, both through greater informational awareness and through the construction of mystery around the widely unknown intelligence that they hold.

Taussig (1999) uses the notion of a 'public secret' as phenomena that is known but not expressed. He says that:

Wherever there is power, there is secrecy, except it is not only secrecy that lies at the core of power, but public secrecy. (Taussig, 1999: 7).

These types of 'public secrets' were not identified in the case-studies researched, but it may be that a more ethnographic style methodology would be required to understand this type of secret in an organisation. Within the interviews however, secrets were identified that appeared to be linked to issues of power and control.

Bok (1983) understands secrecy as being an intentional concealment that does not happen accidentally, and this consciously intentional concealment was present in both case studies. In CICA, knowledge suppression was sometimes framed as a logical and straightforward decision to keep secrets from most staff:

Q: You said you want to be as open and honest as what is professional, but that not everything can be shared. What can't be shared with staff?

A: The Scheme's a good example isn't it, where there's work being done to draft the Scheme but it's inappropriate for us to divulge what that might look like ahead of it going to the House. (CICA interviewee).

In this example, the interviewee makes no attempt to explain the justification of the secrecy, although in the wider context of the interview it

can be surmised that only certain groups of privileged staff should know what is “going to the House [of Commons]”. Indeed, even the interviewee’s choice of language here, indicates a desire to use political jargon that will exclude those without an understanding of what is being referred to and show membership of the elite group who use this type of political shorthand.

Another interviewee in Scottish Enterprise described the overt management of communications to hide plans that aren’t implemented:

I think for me the difference is about communicating the process of change or you know sometimes the nature of change can be quite slow and if you go out and say ‘we’re going to do this’ and then six months, twelve months down the line you’ve not done it [it will look bad]. So the difference is about communicating change as a process and actually communicating it as in ‘we’ve done it’. (Scottish Enterprise interview).

Again, here the interviewee is suggesting that secrecy is reasonable and logical – that it is inadvisable to tell staff about important changes early in the process. In practice, this means that senior managers control how and when all staff, and different groups of staff find out about change or aspects of reform. Senior managers also have the freedom to change their plans without being criticised and/or fail to complete or implement these changes without greater staff awareness. This means that the leaders can retain a stronger image of competence and ensure that plans for reform meet their needs and aspirations before being shared more widely.

At other times, interviewees discussed absences and hiding in more subtle ways. Rather than an interviewee describing how some actions would be explicitly concealed, they instead explained how language was changed or hidden for usually 'junior staff' to understand. For example:

Q. Are staff conscious of your attempts to attract and retain talent?

Would they know what I was talking about if I asked them?

A. No because we don't use those words with the staff deliberately unless they were a leader...(Scottish Enterprise interviewee).

This more patronising approach to less senior staff as requiring a hiding of action or language, aligns with the use of villainous stereotypes to maintain organisational narratives that have been discussed in the previous chapter. The dismissal of alternative narratives helps to create an 'other' that do not deserve to be privy to 'secret' knowledge or privileged language:

...there's no real justification for some of the views that staff hold...

(CICA interviewee)

Once again our staff results were very disappointing. A lot of people express their concerns by saying that the organisation doesn't know where it's going. However, I think they mean that they don't like where the organisation's going. (CICA interviewee).

This dismissal of staff views that don't accord with the senior leader's own narrative also helps to maintain the illusion of a single dominant narrative that supersedes others. This is a useful discursive device for leaders who may be encountering challenges to the implementation of reforms for which they are responsible. This discursive device can be employed with third parties, as in the research interview situation, to downplay challenge and portray a more unified, reasonable and positive meta-narrative.

However, this construction may also be helpful *for the leader themselves*, to justify the operationalisation of reforms that they may have ambiguous feelings about. If the staff externalising doubts about reform are 'villains' or to be excluded from knowledge and privileged language, then this may assist with keeping alternative stories suppressed, including within the internal life of the leader.

7.6 Absences in Narrative Structure

Chapter Six identified some problems with the interpretation of the common discourses identified in the analysis from a narrative perspective, as many lacked key structures associated with narratives. Chapter Two explained for example, how Housley and Fitzgerald (2001) approach the application of narrative from a story-telling perspective with main parts of opening, story and closing. Within these texts however, there was most frequently an apparent absence of beginning or end in the discourses that could loosely be understood as narratives.

From a narrative analysis perspective, there could be a consideration of why some parts of the story were missing and a reflection on whether

these story parts either don't exist or are being deliberately or subconsciously hidden. However, an alternative would be to return to the position taken in the Methods Chapter Three: that attempting to interpret all discourse and text within a narrative framework is itself problematic and unhelpful. Where conventional narrative structures don't exist, it may well be because the text is not a narrative, unless a definition of narrative is used that can be conflated with a more general understanding of language. These absences of structure therefore offer further challenge to the value of narrative analysis and its ability to prove a useful method in every type of qualitative and text based analysis.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter's focus has been on the hidden or absent narratives at work in the texts analysed, including absences in story-telling. These most often appeared to be deliberately hidden, in some cases by avoiding answering questions or by constructing alternative answers with key absences. In other examples, the researcher was given privileged access to information on how the interviewee consciously manipulated information to hide action or language from other groups of staff.

This chapter aimed to address the main research question 'How is public service reform discursively framed in Scotland and what are its underlying themes?' and also the related subsidiary research question 'What are the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland and how do they diverge from UK narratives of public service reform?' A focus on hidden and absent narratives revealed *similarities* between the case study

organisations, yet again problematising the key assumptions of difference embedded in these research questions. However, there were also distinctive differences identified between the organisations and it is surmised that these differences are constructed by their relative positions of power in the governmental hegemony.

The analysis has revealed that there are differences between the narratives utilised by senior managers in the UK and Scottish Government on issues of particular sensitivity, most notably around devolution. This is explained using a framework based on Bourdieu's concept of habitus and field: the primacy of the field in most senior managers' consciousness normatively brings similarities between them, but in relation to the heightened issue of devolution the managers are more strongly occupying and verbalising the context of their habitus. This is a significant addition to existing literatures whereby 'difference' between the Scottish and UK public sector is constructed and considered in a more rudimentary way based on a political science discipline (Parry, 2002; Keating, 2005). The critical textual analysis undertaken in this thesis has exposed and problematised both the way that rhetorical difference is (not) operationalised and the complex narrative utilisation for public sector leaders.

The following chapter will reflect on the analysis of the last four chapters and bring this analysis back to the full set of research questions posed at the start of the thesis. It will consider what has been learned about these case study organisations, public service reform and devolution more generally using a narrative analysis.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

8.1. Introduction

This thesis has focussed on narratives of public sector reform in the Scottish and UK Governments. This is an essential area of research at a time of significant constitutional change. The examination of a single policy subject (public sector reform) provides a window into how devolution is affecting policy discourse and actor behaviour. Through the case studies of CICA and Scottish Enterprise it has been demonstrated that macro-governmental narrative difference is not consistently translated by policy actors into operational difference and does not clearly influence path dependency, as identified in Chapter 1.

The findings of this research fundamentally challenged preconceptions of difference in narratives of public sector reform in the UK and Scottish Governments. They suggest that whilst there are key differences in meta-narratives used by the different administrations, the operationalisation of these differences within the case-study organisations was not evident in a clearly differentiated way and there is more evidence of similarity in narrative between administrations than distinctiveness. In this respect, the Scottish Government's discourse of public sector reform could be considered a narrative failure, although there was evidential traces that the meta-project of independence had been more successful in narrative translation and awareness.

The previous four analytical chapters addressed the original research questions through an interrogation of the data gathered. This final chapter draws together these findings and directly answers the research questions established in Chapter One, demonstrating the original contribution provided by the findings presented in this thesis. It is argued that there are significant difficulties in clearly ascertaining difference between the case study-narratives at the meso and micro levels. Instead, the research found significant evidence of linkages between narrative and discourse enacted in different practice sites. The chapter goes on to problematise the original research questions and highlights the assumed differences between the administrations inherent to the research questions, by contrasting this with the findings of the data analysed. Finally, it is concluded that future research in this areas might utilise a deeper, more holistic approach that engages more fully with different levels of hierarchy within case-study organisations.

8.2 The Main Research Question

The main research question in this thesis, and running throughout the analytical chapters, has been 'How is public service reform discursively framed in Scotland and what are its underlying themes?' This question has proved thorny and problematic. In particular, it has caused difficulties by its fundamental basis on an assumption of a definable discursive framing for public service reform in Scotland, which can be summarised within a limited number of thematic typologies. This question is also based on a secondary problematic assumption that this discursive framing is, to some

extent, distinctive to Scotland. These weaknesses in the research question are reflected in the research findings. The data analysed provides a clear pattern of Scottish 'difference' at a *rhetorical* meta-governmental level only: at the meso-organisational and micro-individual level, there was substantive and unequivocal evidence of similarity in the case-studies regarding how public sector reform was understood and operationalised.

Limitations in understanding the detailed operationalisation of narrative in existing research, created the gap that the main research question sought to address. This research used meta (Government documents about reform), meso (organisational documents about reform) and micro (interviews with individuals) texts to examine this issue to provide a more rounded and deeper set of knowledges, going beyond the parameters of existing research to provide an unusual depth of insight into organisational public service reform. The extent of public service reform is unique for the UK devolved administrations precisely because they have experienced the 'double reform' of devolution itself, and public service reform. In this way, it was assumed at the start of this research that the experience of Scotland of the latest waves of public service reform was always going to be different from that of the UK Government, because staff were experiencing this reform within a different, devolved context.

The main research question was focused on the discursive framing of public service reform in Scotland because, in the crudest terms, it can be used to reflect on how this differs from the 'UK norm', which is increasingly being disrupted. However, the concept of there being either a UK norm or a single 'Scottish' discourse was consistently challenged by the research

findings as unstable and contested, making a straightforward 'compare and contrast' more difficult.

The research found UK narratives co-existing with Scottish narratives in Scotland, making the use of a cross-border authority (CICA) of special significance because it could have provided evidence of three dimensions of narrative (UK/Scotland/hybrid) due to the complexity of the organisation's reserved and devolved powers. Awareness of this complexity called for a more sophisticated argument but challenged understanding and conclusions precisely because the discourses identified were slippery, subjective, multi-faceted and contradictory. Addressing the main research question was particularly complex, because the different levels of data provided different answers.

8.2.1 Meta Discourses of Public Service Reform in Scotland

The thesis began by examining the key Scottish Government text about public services reform, *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*. This discourse is based on four thematic 'pillars of reform', specifically:

- “• a decisive shift towards *prevention*;
- greater integration of public services at a local level driven by better *partnership*, collaboration and effective local delivery;
- greater investment in the *people* who deliver services through enhanced workforce development and effective leadership; and

- a sharp focus on improving *performance*, through greater transparency, innovation and use of digital technology.” (Scottish Government, 2007: 1, emphasis added)

These themes were identified as having narratives of:

- Consistent calls to Scottish nationality and the virtues of a Scottish nation state.
- Appeals to competence and authority.
- A desire to protect Scotland from the UK Government.
- Support for the delivery of place-based services.
- Valuing of public sector staff.
- A more generic support for reforms that will improve performance.

Renewing Scotland's Public Services' sub-textual narrative was an important story of *nation-building*. There were constant pictorial and written references to Scotland, with 'Scotland' and the 'Scottish Government' being used as a quasi-brand. Perhaps even more significantly, the UK Government was 'other' in the document and used variously as both a hidden opposition *and* a more explicit scapegoat for the failure of public services in Scotland. In this way, the UK Government was cast in this story as a clear villain to be defeated.

8.2.2 Meso Discourses of Public Service Reform in Scotland

The seemingly straightforward story of a controlling UK Government as 'other', began to unravel however in the examination of the meso level

Scottish Enterprise Business Plan. Whilst the *Business Plan* is ostensibly aligned to the Scottish Government through the reproduction of its national outcomes, these outcomes were not linked to the work of Scottish Enterprise. More importantly, the reform narratives identified in *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* were largely absent, with the possible exception of a general approach that suggested a commitment to improvement.

It is essential to note that the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan* is not a reform document as such, therefore it is perhaps partly understandable that the Scottish Government's meta-narratives of public service reform are not present. However, when it is considered that the *Business Plan* is looking forward to priorities and actions for the coming years, I would maintain that it would be reasonable for the plan to show at least a sub-narrative of the main Scottish Government themes of public service reform.

Renewing Scotland's Public Services and the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan* were tonally very similar, in that they were both heavy, dry and factual – and thus searching for narratives was difficult. The *Business Plan* was leavened slightly by the Chairman and Chief Executive's opening words, but no substantive alignment in narrative could be identified with *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*. On the contrary, these opening words adopted a narrative approach of globalisation as an imperative for action – in direct contradiction to *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*, which identified the UK Government as the catalyst for Scotland's financial constraints and subsequent necessary reforms.

8.2.3 Micro Discourses of Public Service Reform in Scotland

The interview data further disrupted the assumption that there were specific Scottish narratives about reform waiting to be discovered. There were apparent recurring narratives arising from the interview data, but they had virtually no relationship to the Scottish Government meta-narratives of reform. The only identified recurrent narrative with the meta or meso-narratives, was that of globalisation, suggesting that whilst there may be alignment of narratives and discourse within the organisation, this does not result from a translation of their own government's texts.

The types of recurrent narratives in the Scottish Enterprise interviewees' discourse were reasonably generic, even when being prompted specifically to talk about public sector reform. Interviewees commonly described reform projects in terms of 'heroes and villains', whereby they and other forward thinking managers were implementing positive and reasonable changes, whilst 'villainous others' were opposing change for self-serving reasons. This created a further difficulty in assumptions around how public sector workers absorb, interpret and translate meta-narratives from government. One of the four pillars of reform of *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* was about valuing public sector workers. This narrative appeared to be resisted by Scottish Enterprise interviewees, who often used a discourse closer to the UK Government's *Open Public Services* of vilifying public sector workers and framing them as a threat to reform.

8.2.4 Concluding 'How is Public Service Reform Discursively Framed in Scotland and What are its Underlying Themes?'

The Scottish Government has a clear meta-narrative of reform based around the identity of Scotland as a separate country, and in opposition to the UK Government. Whilst its 'four pillars of reform' can be critiqued as being reasonably opaque and sometimes so broad as to be meaningless (for example 'improving performance'), they do provide a foundational narrative for operationalisation. However, within the Scottish case-study examined in this thesis, this narrative was not evidenced, either at a meso or micro level in the data gathered. Instead, the evidence suggested that if any distinct Scottish discourse about public service reform exists, it is at a meta-level only in published government documents, and that this discourse may unravel, be unknown, resisted or ignored at an organisational meso and micro level.

8.3 'Failed' Narratives of SNP Reform

In support of the overall research question, a number of subsidiary research questions were also examined. The first two were 'Have the SNP administrations since 2007 managed to break away from UK Labour and Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition political constructs of reform?' and 'What are the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland and how do they diverge from UK narratives of public service reform?' Chapter Six introduced the concept of 'failed narratives' in relation to the narratives used and ignored by public sector interviewees. Whilst there was a distinct set of narratives present in *Renewing Scotland's Public*

Services, it was clear from the data that these narratives had not been translated within Scottish Enterprise by senior staff. The identification of the essential failure of rhetoric is vital in challenging existing literature that has focused on critical textual analysis of government policy documents. This research has proved that such an approach can only lead to a partial understanding of policy, practice and policy-in-practice. A fuller understanding of public service reform and its operationalisation within organisations requires the type of multi-level analysis that was conducted in this research.

Part of reflecting on the questions at the start of the previous paragraph, is about recognising the plurality of ideologies and narratives at work. There is no simple divide between Scotland and the UK. Shared ideologies and narratives intermingle and cross-fertilise. These questions problematically continue to make a key assumption that there *is* a difference in public service reform in Scotland and the UK, both in actions taken and in discourse and understanding. These research findings call into question the original premise that there was a clear distinction to be made.

8.3.1 Meta Discourses of SNP Constructs of Reform

Two successive terms of SNP Government (minority (2007) and majority (2011)) have governed with both the New Labour construct of 'Modernising Government' (1999) and the coalition's construct of 'Open Public Services' (2012). The narratives present in *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* suggest that the SNP Government has retained significant aspects of reform based on, or akin to, the UK Governments' imagining of

public service reform. However, at the macro-level, *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* does not clearly map on to the current UK approach. As replicated in Table 8.1, Chapter Four identified the differences in the main meta-narratives in *Open Public Services* and *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* as :

Table 8.1: Key Narrative Findings in *Open Public Services* and *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*

Key <i>Open Public Services</i> Narratives	Key <i>Renewing Scotland's Public Services</i> Narratives
Absence of explicit references to nation state, combined with implicit and symbolic references to nation-state.	Consistent calls to Scottish nationality and the virtues of a Scottish nation state.
Appeals to authority and the assertion of power.	Appeals to competence and authority.
Narrative of globalisation as threat and a driver for reform and austerity.	Desire to protect Scotland from UK Government as driver of reform and austerity.
<i>No comparable narrative.</i>	Support for the delivery of place-based services.
Denigration of public sector staff.	Valuing of public sector staff.
Rhetoric of equality.	<i>No comparable narrative in terms of strength. Equality is a sub-set of the 1st pillar of reform (prevention).</i>
Calls for greater transparency in the public sector.	<i>No comparable narrative in terms of strength. Transparency is a sub-set of the 4th pillar of reform (performance).</i>
<i>No comparable narrative.</i>	A more generic support for reforms that will improve performance.

Whilst there is some similarity of sub-narratives, (for example 'transparency' is framed as vital to improving performance in Scotland, akin to the UK Government's theme of 'openness', and both documents show a concern for equality), there are different areas of emphasis and significant tonal differences. The most striking difference between the documents is the portrayal of public sector workers, with the Scottish Government stressing the importance of valuing public sector workers and the UK Government framing public sector staff as a threat to reform. This finding provides evidence that the distinctive 'Scottishness' and public service orientation identified in the review of literature in Chapter One, is present in Scottish Government discourse. This finding also addresses the research questions by suggesting that the SNP have at least partially managed to break away from UK Government constructs of reform, despite the restraints of its reserved powers and allocated budget.

Alongside the macro features of public service reform in Scotland and the UK outlined in Table 8.1, there is also a key divergence from UK narratives in terms of the ideological dimension of nationhood that is present in the Scottish Government imagining of reform. In this construction of public sector reform, reform is necessary due to a failing UK Government. This narrative aligns with, and feeds, the larger SNP narrative of the creation of Scotland as a fully independent state and the depiction of an oppressive and unsuitable UK Government as driving an imperative for independence. Alongside the meta-narrative of independence, the use of place-based services as a pillar of reform by the Scottish Government lends further credence to the notion that public service delivery is more efficient and appropriate when controlled by geographically local territorial agencies.

These findings provide further fuel and positioning in favour of the meta-project of Scottish independence.

8.3.2 Meso Discourses of SNP Constructs of Reform

The strength of the above findings are, however, somewhat undermined or rendered more complex when the meso-level data is included in the analysis. As previously highlighted, distinctive 'Scottishness' was largely absent in the *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan*, which in the limited narrative present, aligned with the UK Government's reason for financial constraint due to globalisation. This provides some evidence that, at a meso-level, Scottish public bodies may not have fully broken away from UK Government constructs and understanding. It was not clear from the analysis whether this is a conscious rejection of Scottish Government discourse, or a lack of awareness of Scottish Government difference.

8.3.3 Micro Discourses of SNP Constructs of Reform

The weakness in the translation of Scottish Government discourse and consequential operationalisation of an attempt to break-away from UK Government constructs, is then further evidenced through interview data in the analysis. Interviews with senior managers in both organisations did not reveal a specific awareness or alignment at Scottish Enterprise with Scottish Government reform narratives. Instead, the interviews seemed to suggest a stronger alignment with the UK Government, in particular by repeating the use of the globalisation imperative and also indicating a critical interpretation of certain groups of reform-resistant staff.

At this micro-level the narrative patterns between the two organisations were largely similar, based around common story lines such as heroes and villains, the march of progress and the benefits of neo-liberal managerialism, as discussed in Chapter Six. Within these broad narratives, there was much commonality around specific story-lines. For example, interviewees from both organisations identified the same villains to reform - other staff; middle managers; predecessors; and external consultants. All interviewees also had a tendency to depict themselves as heroes.

The similarities between the narratives of senior manager interviewees in each of the case study organisations seemed to undermine the assumption that the *Scottish Government's* ideological features of reform are indicative of the wider ideological features of reform *in Scotland*. Instead, the evidence appeared to suggest that whilst the Scottish Government had a set of clearly differentiated ideological divergences, public sector bodies and their senior leaders demonstrated and enacted a contrasting set of ideological features of reform. These ideological features were not fully aligned with the imagining of the UK Government's *Open Public Services*, but were closer to this than they were to *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*.

There was some evidence throughout the interviews detailed in Chapters Six and Seven, that the leaders themselves were not clear about how they should have been answering the questions asked by the interviewer. This was demonstrated by the amendment of interview transcripts after these

were issued to the interviewees post-interview, and the frequent contradictions voiced, sometimes within a single answer. This confusion may reflect the devolved settlement and its embedded conflicts, where public sector workers are struggling to identify exactly what is being asked of them by competing voices. Likewise, as discussed above, the published policy documents also sometimes contained empty or ambiguous rhetorics of public service reform.

Despite the above ambiguities, the interview data shed some light on the question of whether there was a conscious rejection of Scottish Government discourse, or a simple lack of awareness amongst senior managers. As detailed in Chapter Seven, Scottish Enterprise interviewees showed a distinct awareness of the political and government context, in part illuminated by CICA's apparent lack of awareness in this area. This indicated that Scottish Enterprise senior leaders are exposed to and engaged with wider government narratives. The lack of the translation of reform messages in Scottish Enterprise's work may therefore indicate a resistance or narrative failure, rather than a simple lack of awareness.

8.3.4 Concluding 'Failed' Narratives of SNP Reform

The evidence presented in this thesis suggests that the research questions 'Have the SNP administrations since 2007 managed to break away from UK Labour and Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition political constructs of reform?' and 'What are the ideological features of public service reform in Scotland and how do they diverge from UK narratives of public service reform?' each need to be addressed in two

parts. Firstly, there *is* clear evidence in *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* and the creation of a 'four pillar' narrative, that the SNP administration *have* created a reform construct that differs from the UK Government, especially with regard to the rejection of the demonisation of public sector workers. However, this initial finding must be tempered with the recognition that the research findings did not reveal the use of this reform narrative in the Scottish case study organisation or by its senior leaders. To the contrary, these leaders used narratives akin to their UK counterparts and sometimes (specifically with regard to globalisation and the depiction of public sector workers), used narratives that aligned with the UK Government and were in direct opposition to the SNP-led Scottish Government's discourse.

This nuanced finding suggests that whilst the SNP administration has made a clear attempt to break away from the existing political constructs, they have ultimately failed to embed an alternative narrative throughout their governance network. This can be explained in a number of ways, but through the lens of this thesis' focus on power, it would appear that the dominant UK Government is better able to control and communicate meta-narratives throughout UK public bodies, including Scottish agencies. To some extent, this is further evidenced by the tonal differences in the UK and Scottish published documents examined. Compared to the Scottish documents, the UK Government documents were engaging, personalised and morally driven. The Scottish documents were drier, based more on lists of facts and sometimes opaque and difficult to absorb. This again provides evidence that as Gabriel (2004) argues, emotionality and passion

are essential for narrative success and, a sophisticated understanding is required of how individuals respond to differently framed discourse.

Importantly, there was a lack of evidence that the success of UK narratives is based on a deliberate targeting of Scottish public sector workers by UK discourse. Conversely, it was the Scottish Enterprise interviewees who showed the greatest political awareness of the Scottish Government that they served. However, the hegemonic position of the UK Government may mean that they are better able to saturate and control public sector narratives. Thus, it can be concluded that it is this combination of a captivating narrative and substantial control, that may result in greater success in translation.

8.4 Problems with Interpreting Text as Narrative

A further subsidiary research question addressed through the research was 'Do Scottish and UK policy texts follow different 'plots' in their stories?' This research question was substantially examined in Chapters Four and Five of the thesis, but the examination of plots in these chapters did not provide a clear answer to the research question.

In returning to the research question in search for an answer, it is necessary to recognise that whilst it was possible to read the Scottish and UK policy texts as stories about reform and interpret the content as having a plot of sorts, it was not possible to identify many of the key features of a narrative in these texts, such as defined beginnings and endings.

Moreover, it was even more difficult to clearly identify a 'plot' as such,

especially in the Scottish Government documents, which were more fact and process-based, making the text more resistant to narrative analysis. It was only possible to use a narrative analysis for these texts by using a loose definition of narrative that considers 'narrative', as akin to 'language'. In this way, the special value of narrative analysis was virtually lost and the analysis became more a straightforward discourse analysis.

Due to the form of the policy texts analysed, it became more difficult to fully address the research question that asked: 'Do Scottish and UK policy texts follow different 'plots' in their stories?' Thus, clear plots in these texts could not be elucidated and therefore a fully elaborated and evidenced answer to this particular research question cannot be provided.

However, reflecting back on the research question, it can be concluded that whilst the discourse of the policy texts did not always conform to straightforward story-based 'plots', the policy texts *did* tell different stories, for example of the role and value of public sector workers. In light of these findings, the research question was refined to reflect this more discourse analysis based use of 'story', rather than a narrative based approach.

8.5 Actor Translation

The last subsidiary research question addressed through the research was, 'Do Scottish and UK public sector staff interpret generic texts differently, and if so, why?' This last question pulls together the previous subsidiary questions and turns to the use of official texts by public sector actors. Addressing this question required a consideration of how different

actors in different countries interpreted texts and whether there were parallels that aligned to the government administration for which they were working. It was also necessary to examine the circumstances whereby actors behave independently of generic texts and have their own motives for the rejection, absorption or translation of these texts.

A potential critique of the findings in relation to this question, is that there is no specific evidence that the public sector leaders interviewed were aware of the published texts examined, making it problematic to draw any definitive conclusion on how they may or may not have interpreted these texts. Although the initial narrative analysis of published documents was undertaken before the interviews, I did not explicitly refer to the documents and their contents during the interviews. However, whilst it is not possible to say with certainty whether the public sector leaders had read the texts analysed, it can be reasonably concluded that they were not aware of these texts or narratives, with the possible exception of the two CICA leaders who are pictured in *The Way Ahead*.

Analysis of the interviews with senior managers in both case study organisations, revealed that their personal narratives were largely uninfluenced by the narratives of the public documents, especially in relation to the meta-narratives of their respective governments. It can be assumed that those CICA leaders interviewed who are pictured and ostensibly quoted in *The Way Ahead* may have written or authorised at least part of this document, but aside from this assumption, there is nothing to suggest any greater awareness of higher level narratives amongst the interviewees. This is a significant finding because it

challenges the importance of the notion of translation in existing literature (Lendvai and Stubbs, 2007) by exposing organisational evidence that translation may simply not occur.

This finding is based on an assumption as opposed to firm evidence. However, using my personal knowledge and experience, the likelihood that this assumption is correct is strengthened. My experience in the civil service is that government documents are very rarely read by civil servants who are not working directly on the document themselves, and most civil servants would not even necessarily have read the whole document for which they are responsible. Since most of my experience has been gained within policy roles in central government, I judge it reasonable to assume that the public sector leaders interviewed, working at arms-length from central government in quasi-independent agencies, are even less likely to have been exposed to these central policy publications.

The assumption that these members of staff were directly unaware of the narratives of generic texts, goes some way to explain the apparent mismatch in narratives used. This conclusion relates back to the earlier finding that suggested a more successful embedding of UK narratives. If public sector staff are not being directly exposed to these key reform publications, it is the wider and more commonly re-told narratives of reform upon which they will base their own work of translation. It would appear that the UK Government's hegemonic position allows them to more successfully navigate and control reform messages, superseding Scottish Government messages – even in Scotland. The evidence suggested that where there had been an absorption of government reform narratives, it

was the UK Government's stories that were more likely to be translated and operationalised.

8.6 Power and Control

The evidence presented in this study shows that Scottish civil servants frequently used similar narratives to their UK counterparts, indicating a weakness in the distinct Scottish narrative. This suggests that the SNP Scottish Government had encountered difficulties in successfully breaking away from UK Government political constructs and carving new narratives of public service reform. In this respect, it can be concluded that the SNP administration is both subject to the dominant UK hierarchy and constrained by it. These constraints should not be regarded as straightforward legal limits on which policies the Scottish Government have the devolved power to develop and implement. The restraints of the UK Government run deep and manifest themselves in the language used in public sector actors, reflecting a context and understanding where UK Government definitions hold supremacy in Scotland.

The research has also shown that in its publication *Renewing Scotland's Public Services*, the Scottish Government has competently turned the apparent dominance of UK Government discourse to its advantage, by highlighting the sovereign hegemonical position of the UK Government and blaming it for financial austerity in Scotland. In this way, the Scottish Government as subject, is still an actor well able to turn its own marginalised position to its ideological advantage, by explicitly stating this disadvantage and then using this as an argument for independence.

Whilst the Scottish Enterprise interviewees did not explicitly appear to demonstrate any awareness of the Scottish Government reform narratives, their frequent and routine references to the Scottish Government and politics showed a heightened awareness of the hegemonic structure and context. From this perspective, it could be argued that this sub-narrative of dominance and subservience has been effectively communicated in Scotland, and is reflected in the every-day speech of senior public leaders.

In terms of broader public service reform aims and narratives, the SNP administration has appeared unable to adequately control and embed its own narrative within the case-study organisation researched. The published documents examined have shown to be weak in tone and overly bureaucratic, a poor match for the more invigorated and engaging style utilised by the UK government. It could therefore be concluded that the Scottish Government has constructed a different narrative of public service reform but that this could be construed as a 'failed' narrative in terms of its ability to be entirely absorbed and translated.

These findings notwithstanding it must be recognised that public service reform is not the meta-project of the SNP Scottish Government. The current Scottish administration's key prize is independence, and other policy development and communication is arguably secondary to this. It can therefore be alternatively concluded that the most important narrative – that Scotland is subject to the failing dominant UK Government *has* effectively saturated senior leader consciousness, so that awareness of this hegemony is present in the stories that they tell, including about public sector reform.

8.7 Locating the Findings in Existing Literature and the Contribution of this Thesis in Taking Understanding Forward

As detailed throughout this thesis, there is already substantive consideration in existing literature of issues of public sector reform (Hood, 1991; McTavish, 2003; Sapru, 2010), devolution and Scottish distinctiveness (Paterson et al., 2004; Stewart, 2004a) or Scottish and UK converging pressures (Watson and West, 2008; Law and Mooney, 2012). The findings of this thesis have built on this literature by enhancing understanding of public sector reform in Scotland. This has been done by providing evidential support that Scottish and UK public sector bodies' senior staff use similar narratives of reform, challenging claims of a 'New Scotland' (Hassan and Warhurst, 2002; Paterson et al., 2004; Bechofer and McCrone, 2004) with regards to how reform is translated and operationalised. At the macro-level of government documents, significant variation in reform narratives were identified, supporting claims of Scottish distinctiveness. However, when considered in the context of the meso and micro level findings it can be concluded that these differences are *rhetorical* rather than reflective of actions taken in individual circumstances.

There is considerable organisational literature that uses narrative analysis to interpret stories and phenomena (Gabriel, 1995; 1999; 2000; 2004; Llewellyn, 2001; Sims, 2004) and specifically organisational change (Robbins, 2001; Fineman et al, 2005). There is also some limited organisational literature consideration of the use of narrative analysis to

understand discourses of devolution (Housley and Fitzgerald, 2001), specifically in the Welsh context. The research findings in this thesis add to these literatures by providing a narrative analysis of organisational reform in a Scottish context, comparing the analytical findings with a UK case-study. This comparative approach provides a more sophisticated analysis than existing research by situating the Scottish agency and the narratives identified in relationship to the broader public sector and governmental hegemony. This presents the findings in context, rather than in isolation. This greater contextualisation has shown that many of the previously identified organisational narrative typologies such as hero and survivor (Store, 1989 (cited in Fischer, 2003); Gabriel, 1995) were present in the narratives occurring in this data, strengthening the assertion that there are only a limited number of basic stories and plots re-told. However whilst building on this literature, the thesis' approach of cutting across two different agencies at the meta, meso and micro levels, facilitated the formulation of a complex understanding of how and why these recurring typologies are utilised. It has been found that the use common stories and discursive devices in both governments and their agencies help individuals to consolidate their personal power, defuse challenge and divert attention from uncomfortable issues.

Chapter One established three significant gaps in the existing literature base. These were a lack of consideration of the role of *narrative and discourse* in understanding devolution; an absence of the notion of 'double reform' in the devolved Scotland, and; a limited analysis of the role of individual actors in constructing narratives of reform. Each of these key gaps in the literature is now examined in turn. In doing so, the contribution

of this thesis in addressing these gaps and moving debates forward is explained.

8.7.1 A Lack of Consideration of the Role of Narrative and Discourse in Understanding Devolution

Mooney, Scott and Williams (2006) assert that discussions of devolution in the UK are dominated largely by a narrow focus on institutional or organisational difference from a political science perspective and neglect wider issues, ideologies and changes. This approach (Paterson, 2002; Stewart, 2004a) has a tendency to accumulate 'facts' and statistics about devolution in an attempt to highlight difference from the UK. Such an approach overlooks any knowledge as to how devolution is itself influencing *understandings* of reform and how this understanding then influences behaviour. Literature continues to identify policy or operational difference in the administrations, but without an understanding of the role of discourse or ideology in these processes.

This thesis has focussed on an examination of reform *narratives and* complements the traditional political science perspective's concern with institutional or organisational difference, sometimes challenging the conclusions previously made. In particular, the multi-level discourse analysis in this thesis has revealed that theories of a 'New Scotland' (Hassan and Warhurst, 2002; Paterson et al., 2004; Bechofer and McCrone, 2004) have taken insufficient cognisance of difference as a rhetorical device, opposed to difference in policies, actions and the stories told within public sector agencies. The macro-level analysis shows that the

SNP administration has built a distinctive construction of public service reform, but the meso and micro level analysis demonstrates that this distinction is largely overlooked within its agencies.

8.7.2 An Absence of the Notion of 'Double Reform' in the Devolved Scotland

Public sector reform has been well examined by theorists (Barnes, Newman and Sullivan, 2007; Newman et al., 2008) and the role of language and discourse in reform has also been extensively considered (Clarke and Newman, 1998; Finlayson, 1998; Fairclough, 2000). However these literatures are largely silent on the specific application of discursive practice in the devolved Scottish context.

The current devolution settlement is itself a subset of New Labour's construction of public sector reform (Cabinet Office, 1999), yet I have shown that existing literature has not explored the significance of 'double reform' in the devolved context: Scottish public servants have been subject to both the reforms of devolution of certain powers *and* the wider neo-liberal reforms of government. I have identified and demonstrated the value of the notion of double reform, by proving evidence that rather than double reform being a problematic pressure for the Scottish Government to manage, it has provided an opportunity to be exploited. In *Renewing Scotland's Public Services* there is a strong narrative of UK Government as incompetent and/or villainous oppressor. In this way, the devolved Scottish Government has had the ability to construct public service reform as a method of making further and deeper claims to political legitimacy.

Double reform has facilitated work to destabilise the UK Government and strengthen the Scottish Government's authenticity.

8.7.3 A Limited Analysis of the Role of Individual Actors in Constructing Narratives of Reform

The identification of public servants as active agents of change has a rich tradition in literature (Lipsky, 1980). However the influence of this literature has been limited in relation to the consideration of public service reform and devolution. Mooney and Law (2007) identify a lack of research into how reform affects individual workers, an absence that this thesis has partly addressed by the analysis of interviews with senior managers into their experience of public sector reform. Additionally this thesis asserts that there is a further specific research gap endemic in the literature around Scottish difference, as to how notions of difference are created and supported at the micro-level by individual actors.

The interview data analysed and presented in this thesis provides a rich seam of insight into these overlooked micro- processes at work. Firstly, the examination of text from public sector workers talking about their personal experiences of reform has indicated traces of tension and confusion in implementing reform. There is evidence of collateral damage to individuals struggling to reconcile pressures to reform with notions of self. Furthermore, the detailed analysis of interview data challenges the basis of macro-difference by demonstrating a very weak translation of macro-narratives into micro-level understanding and implementation. Counter intuitively, the data suggested that senior managers were

undermining the macro-reform narratives of their respective governments by not incorporating these narratives into their own work. In the case of Scottish Enterprise, individuals are translating the competing narratives of the UK government (globalisation as the cause of financial austerity) into their own discourse.

One of the most important research findings has been this general lack of alignment between the narratives of the macro, meso and micro levels within the respective government and their agencies. An assumption of linear alignment within each government narrative has rapidly unravelled and using a Bourdieusian framework, it is asserted that this is due to the primacy of the field in the consciousness of managers and competition over scarce capital, leading to similarity in the exploitation of discursive devices to build authority and legitimacy. The specific habitus of individuals and their organisation's position in the hegemonic structure appears less influential in the way the interviewees generally construct narratives of reform.

8.8 Methodological Issues

With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to identify some potential problems with the research findings caused by the methodology used. For example, Chapter Seven explained that all interviewees had a tendency to depict themselves as heroes. However reading this finding critically, it is important to consider whether this depiction is indicative of a wider narrative that is routinely deployed by the individuals, or is a fabrication constructed within the context of the interview situation based on the

apparent need to prove one's own expertise to the interviewer. In these specific cases, since the hero narrative was also present in the organisational documents (especially for CICA) it is concluded that this finding was not created artificially by the interview context only, although it is still important to recognise that an interview format may encourage the use of this kind of narrative framing.

Similarly, while an interview methodology risks artificially creating findings relevant only to its own context, the interviewee may also use the interview format to facilitate evasion. It is worth reflecting that interviews and public documents can be seen as similar texts in as much as they are both presenting a public face – Wood and Kroger's 'facework' (2000), rather than having a truly private conversation. This was illustrated for example, in Chapter 7 by the interviewees who provided responses to questions but did not address the point/s raised. It was also highlighted that many interviewees re-wrote sections of their transcripts regarding sensitive issues. However, providing the researcher is mindful of this type of evasion and critically evaluates the responses provided, avoidance and ambiguity can yield a rich seam of data in itself, as was detailed in Chapter Seven.

Another methodological issue encountered during this research relates to the underpinning use of narrative analysis. There were recurrent difficulties with reading all the documents and interviews as narrative, and it was only possible by using a loose definition of narrative that some of the documents analysed could be subjected to a narrative analysis. The *Scottish Enterprise Business Plan*, in particular lacked key parts of a

story's required structure. It could be considered that if text lacks key components of narrative then it is not a narrative, or alternatively, it could be considered that it is just a narrative with an absence. Ultimately, the perspective chosen only matters if there is a core value of narrative analysis that discourse analysis cannot adequately address – then it matters which pieces of text should be subject to narrative analysis. Within this thesis, the notion of 'narrative' has been largely conflated with 'story' and I have not been able to identify a value specific to *narrative_analysis* as such. However, the core additional value of narrative or story based analysis as I see it, is the richness, interest and diversity it brings to both the research process and the content of the research findings. Stories of heroes and villains can bring the humdrum subject of public service reform alive, encouraging engagement with the roles identified and the reasons that these archetypes are in use. The work of researchers such as Yiannis Gabriel (1995; 1996; 1999; 2000; 2004; 2005) is alive and vibrant precisely because it is fundamentally engaging with mythical creations and metaphors with literature and art. This fuels creativity and understanding, providing both short-cuts to comprehension and new avenues for exploration. I would argue that narrative or story analysis may not be an analytical category of its own, suitable for all types of data and textual analysis, but a linguistic device that can be identified through discourse analysis, that provides an alternative reading and method of engagement with text.

8.9 Conclusions and Routes for Future Research

It is important to acknowledge that the data collection for this thesis took place around 2011. There is no doubt that the case-study organisations and the senior leaders interviewed will have continued to develop over time and been exposed to further messages of reform. In the Scottish context, there is heightened awareness of governmental difference due to the referendum on independence in September 2014 and it is possible that a re-examination of more current text would show greater difference between the administrations. With the referendum campaigns resulting in a move towards greater devolved powers transferring to the Scottish Parliament, this provides an opportunity for the re-examination of reform narratives employed in a Scotland with heightened sensitivity around issues of difference from the rest of the UK.

Public sector reform in the terms deployed in this thesis had not been directly referenced in the campaign for independence (2012-2014) or for claims around extra devolved powers for Scotland including 'devo-max', as ostensibly public sector reform is already devolved to the Scottish Parliament. However, the nature of the devolution settlement means that policies that will significantly influence greater reform, such as the envelope of Scottish funding and the privatisation of public services, are key tenets of campaigning (Guardian, 2014).

There is an embedded difficulty in studying rapid political discursive change, in that by the time the research is complete, the discourse being

examined has already changed. However, as highlighted in the first chapter of this thesis, there needs to be a greater research focus in these areas to facilitate the development of a more sophisticated understanding of UK and Scottish narratives. Additionally, the notion of 'double reform' developed in this thesis could be usefully tested in other devolved administrations, to deepen understanding of how devolution has been operationalised outside Scotland.

There is a clear gap in these research findings in that whilst there was an examination of different levels of narrative in the case studies, the analysis stopped at the identified 'micro' level of interviews with senior leaders. With greater resources, time and access, the analysis could have usefully continued to excavate through the different levels within the case study organisations, by gathering the narratives of more junior staff. In particular, the middle managers commonly identified in the interviews as villainous 'others' could have illuminated and deepened the findings. Also with the benefit of hindsight, the interviewees could have been more pointedly asked whether they were aware of the narratives present in the published documents analysed, in order that a more informed judgement could have been made as to whether translation was present or narratives consciously rejected.

Throughout this thesis, there has been a continuing engagement with Foucauldian influenced themes of power and control. The thesis has made evident that governments and public sector workers are subjects and actors, both manipulated by and manipulating discourse to resist, change and control. Within the contested devolution settlement, public sector

reform is just one site where this power struggle is played out. It has been evidenced that the UK Government has the stronger hand in ensuring that its own narratives become translated by organisations and senior leaders, but the Scottish Government has also forged its own narratives and to at least some extent, has been able to ensure that its own marginalised position is in the consciousness of its senior public leaders.

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM, CICA EXAMPLE
INFORMATION SHEET FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWEES

(To be distributed to participants)

CICA Change Programme: Exploring the Perspective of Key Leaders

Thank you for your interest in this study.

Purpose:

This is part of a study of British public sector reform and the relationship of devolution to how change is framed. CICA is being used as a case study of reform. I have asked you to become involved because you have a significant influence on how CICA's own change programme is progressed and communicated.

Participation:

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one on one interview with me about how CICA reform is being managed, influenced and communicated.

Time:

You will be asked to spend approximately one hour in the interview.

Changing Your Mind:

You may leave the study at any time if you change your mind about participating. If you decide to leave the study, I will not use any information that you have shared with me. I will give you a copy of the transcript of our

interview. If you wish, you may change or remove any part of this transcript.

Dissemination and Confidentiality:

The recording and transcript will be used by me to reflect on how reform in CICA is being interpreted and managed by senior staff. Parts of the transcript and my reflections on them will be used in the production of a PhD thesis. The research data and recordings will be kept for five years after the completion of the PhD in a secure cabinet in my home. After five years, all of the data collected will be destroyed. Some of this information may be published in books and journals, as well as shared. You will not be named in the study and any part of your participation will be attributed to "a senior member of staff in CICA". Where requested, I will send participants a copy of the final thesis when it is complete.

Thank you!

CONSENT FORM –INTERVIEWS

You are invited to participate in a study:

CICA Change Programme: Exploring the Perspective of Key Leaders

Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.

Researcher: Nikola Plunkett, The Open University

Mailing Address:

The Open University

Social Policy

Walton Hall

Milton Keynes

MK7 6AA

np527@student.ac.uk

You can also contact me at 0141 418 5389 during office hours.

If you wish to speak to someone else about this research you can contact:

Dr Deb Drake

d.drake@open.ac.uk

01908 652310

Purpose and Procedure: I am doing a study to learn about public sector reform and the relationship of devolution to how change is framed.

This research will continue over the next 4 years and this in-depth personal interview forms one of the first parts of the study. The interview will take approximately one hour.

Potential Risks & Benefits: There are no known risks associated with this study.

There are no direct benefits to you in participating in this study. However, I would expect you to enjoy the opportunity to talk about your own perspective on change and that you will find the final research findings of interest. The results of this study may be disseminated at academic conferences and publications and be used towards the development of a final PhD thesis.

Recordings and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home. Data will be destroyed five years after the PhD is complete.

Data Protection: This study must adhere to the Data Protection Act. Personal data must be processed following these principles so that data are:

processed fairly and lawfully

obtained for specified and lawful purposes

adequate, relevant and not excessive

accurate and, where necessary, kept up-to-date

not kept for longer than necessary

processed in accordance with the subject's rights

kept secure

not transferred abroad without adequate protection

Confidentiality: I will keep confidential all information arising in interview discussions with you. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed.

Only my supervision team and I will listen to the recordings. Recordings and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet. Some or all of the transcripts may be used in the final thesis. You may ask to have the recorder turned off at any point.

Your name will not appear in any report, conference presentation or publication about this study. Direct quotations from interview may be used in publications, but transcripts and quotations will not include the names of participants. Although the data from this study will be published and presented at conferences, you will be referred to "a senior member of CICA staff". The consent forms will be stored separately from the transcripts, so that it will not be possible to associate a name with any given set of responses.

Right to Withdraw: You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed. You are free to cease participation at any time and any data you have provided will be destroyed if you request this, up to September 2012.

You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

Questions: If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact me at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the Open University Ethics Committee 25 August 2010.

Consent to Participate: *I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.*

(Signature of Participant) (Date)

(Signature of Researcher)

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

Introductory

- What is your role in the organisation?
- How did you come to work here in this role?

Current Context

- What kinds of changes are happening in the organisation at the moment?
- Why are these changes happening?
- What do you want to achieve? What does success look like?
- Are you confident of success? What could go wrong?
- Have you experienced changes like this before? [If yes – where was that? What was similar/different to here?: If no – what is different here that is driving these changes?]

Wider Awareness

- What messages are you getting from central government about the way in which your organisation must change?
- What are your views on these messages?
- Are the changes in this organisation influenced by central government? [If yes – in what way?]

Staff Understanding

- How are the changes communicated in the organisation?
- What do other people in the organisation think about these changes? [Senior/junior staff]
- What positive/ negative reactions have you had?
- Do you think they understand the changes?
- Do you think they understand the reasons for change?
- Are there any changes that need to be concealed from other staff?
- How are other staff involved in the changes?
- How are people showing disagreement with the changes?

Wider Understanding

- How are the changes communicated outside the organisation?
- How have people outside the organisation reacted to these changes?
- What positive/ negative reactions have you had?
- Do you think people from outside the organisation understand the changes?
- Do you think people from outside the organisation understand the reasons for change?